CONNECTIONS

THE QUARTERLY JOURNAL

PUTIN'S LAST WAR

EDITORS: TODOR TAGAREV,
LADA ROSLYCKY, AND PHILIPP FLURI

Partnership for Peace Consortium of Defense Academies and Security Studies Institutes

Dr. Raphael Perl	Sean S. Costigan
Executive Director	Editor-In-Chief and Chair, Editorial Board

CONNECTIONS

THE QUARTERLY JOURNAL

Vol. 21, no. 3, Summer 2022

Contents

Vol. 21, no. 3, Summer 2022

Table of Contents

Putin's Last War: Narratives, Counternarratives, and Early Lessons Learned

Todor Tagarev, [1] *Lada Roslycky,* [2] *and Philipp Fluri* [3]

[1]   *Institute of Information and Communication Technologies,*
      Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, Sofia, Bulgaria, http://www.iict.bas.bg/EN

[2]   *Black Trident Defense and Security Consulting Group,*
      https://www.theblacktrident.com/

[3]   *Department of International Affairs, Wenzao Ursuline University (WZU),*
      Kaohsiung, Taiwan, https://c041.wzu.edu.tw/

Abstract: In the early hours of February 24, 2022, the armed forces of the Russian Federation and armed formations of the so-called Donetsk and Lugansk people's republics attacked Ukraine from the north, east, and south. In parallel, Russia conducted massive cyberattacks and propaganda campaigns. To the surprise of many analysts, Ukraine demonstrated exceptional cohesion, resilience, and will to fight. The raging war is already influencing the international security environment and the thinking on societal preparedness, military capabilities and operations, and will continue to do so in the coming decades. This editorial article presents the early lessons learned from the war, with a focus on Russia's propaganda narratives and information warfare and ways to counter them, the role of professional military education, and combat medical support.

Keywords: forecasting, propaganda, disinformation, narrative, resilience, information warfare, professional military education, Global Health Engagement, interoperability

In the turmoil in the spring of 2014, immediately following the Revolution of Dignity, Russia's President Vladimir Putin ordered an attack on Crimea and instigated and supported the separatist activities in Donbas. Encouraged by Russia's

early successes in its war on Ukraine and the lukewarm approach of some Western countries to imposing sanctions, Putin ordered the massive February 2022 invasion, initially focused on Ukraine's capital and leadership. To his surprise, Ukraine showed outstanding resilience and will to defend its sovereignty and integrity at any cost, and the democratic world became more, rather than less, united in helping Ukraine and sanctioning the aggressor.

In the authors' view, Putin's miscalculations and the united response of the Ukrainian society and the West will likely turn the Russia-Ukraine war into Putin's last war. In the meantime, the raging war is already influencing the international security environment and the thinking on societal preparedness, military capabilities, and operations. Moreover, the war experience will continue to do so in the foreseeable future. Therefore, drawing and implementing lessons is a continuous, long-term endeavor.

This special issue of *Connections: The Quarterly Journal* is dedicated to some of the early lessons learned from the war, focusing on Russia's propaganda narratives and information warfare and ways to counter them, the role of professional military education, and combat medical support.

In "Political Analysis or Fortune-Telling by Crystal-Ball? Western Think Tanks' Challenges with Forecasting Putin's War," two Ukrainian authors analyze publications of the most influential Western think tanks and media channels. Davlikanova and Kompantseva found out that policy think tanks have discussed at length the factors contributing to the likelihood of a large-scale invasion but have practically dismissed their impact on Putin's decision to invade, at least in the near-term perspective. In contrast, major US and UK media outlets regularly informed their readers about the possible invasion of the Russian Federation into Ukraine. The authors conclude by recommending that political analysis of statements and events is set in the local cultural context and tracks markers of impending conflict in the media since "changing narratives, messages, and lexical signals are unmistakable evidence of the real situation."

Then, Erik Fagergren discusses "Russia's Gambit to Redefine the Current World Order." Based on the analysis of a series of national security documents of the Russian Federation and the views of President Putin, the author concludes that pacifying Ukraine is just Kremlin's intermediate objective, while Russia aims to redefine the world order and reassert its position as a major player in countering the liberal democracy. However, what Putin achieved is to unite the West against a shared common threat and strengthen its determination to counter it "through unprecedented sanctions, increased national defense spending, and military deterrence options."

The third article, "Excessive Brotherly Love? – 'Fraternity' of Russians and Ukrainians as a Russian Propaganda Narrative," takes on the myth that the two people are very similar. Based on the findings of several surveys, Maryna Starodubska demonstrates that although there are some similarities, the differences between the two cultures are considerable. Hence, the claim for "fraternity" just serves Kremlin's propaganda, as it turned out – temporarily.

The remaining three articles present early lessons learned from the war, respectively, on the role of professional military education, countering information warfare, and providing combat medical support.

In "The Impact of War on the Ukraine Military Education System: Moving Forward in War and Peace," Major General Serhii Salkutsan and Dr. Al Stolberg demonstrate how the reforms of the system of professional military education of Ukraine after the Revolution of Dignity have provided agile and resilient military leadership. The ability to exercise mission command turned into the main advantage of the Armed Forces of Ukraine against the numerically superior and technologically more advanced aggressor. And while in wartime, educational institutions need to adapt rapidly and emphasize practical training, once the war is over, they must deliver the academic courses required by the national higher education standards. The authors conclude with a call to align educational reforms with other evolving components of the military system, incorporate lessons learned from the war, and continue the cooperation with NATO and European Union states.

Notwithstanding the brutal invasion of Ukraine violating Ukraine's territorial integrity and international law, many countries and individuals have expressed their support or sympathy for Russia and criticized the Western leadership. In "Distorting Your Perception of Russia's Aggression: How Can We Combat Information Warfare?" Ho Ting (Bosco) Hung seeks the explanation in the information warfare waged by Russia and supported by China. By reviewing the academic literature, the author identifies strategies that make this type of warfare effective, provides data on its impact, and suggests countermeasures that can be applied at individual and governmental levels.

The article by John Quinn wraps up this special issue by drawing lessons for NATO and Ukraine in providing medical support. The author emphasizes the need for global health engagement that covers the continuum from prehospital care in a battlefield environment to rehabilitation and promotes readiness and interoperability.

* * *

As the war continues to rage across Ukraine, *Connections* will continue to present rigorous and objective analyses and lessons drawn from organizing for, fighting, and supporting the war efforts. Of particular interest are the ways Ukraine, and the democratic world supporting it, managed to sustain the armed forces, maintain cohesion and enhance resilience.

We are grateful to Edward Clark, Tamar Pataraia, and Iryna Krasnoshtan for their contribution to editing this special issue.

The next issue of the journal will be dedicated entirely to the Russia-Ukraine war. We will welcome your contributions to future issues of *Connections* on the

topic that is shaping the European and global security environment, defense, and deterrence for the coming decades.

24 February 2023
Garmisch-Partenkirchen, Germany

Disclaimer

About the Authors

Dr. **Todor Tagarev** is an experienced security and defense policymaker with a background in cybernetics and control theory and applications. He is currently a professor at the Institute of Information and Communication Technologies of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences and leads its Centre for Security and Defence Management. His current research is focused on defense policy-making, crisis management, and cybersecurity. Prof. Tagarev has been a member of the Editorial Board of *Connections: The Quarterly Journal* since 2004.
E-mail: tagarev@gmail.com. https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4424-0201

Dr. **Lada Roslycky** is the founder and Managing Partner of Black Trident Defense and Security Consulting Group. An American-Canadian-Ukrainian international security expert, she is the lead author of the national security section of the 2019 Toronto Principles, the 5-year Roadmap for Ukrainian Reforms. Lada holds a Master's degree in International & European Law (University of Amsterdam) and a PhD degree (Rijksuniversiteit Groningen). She is a co-founder and former Head of Content of the independent Defence Anti-Corruption Commission (NAKO) in Kyiv. *E-mail*: lada@theblacktrident.com

Dr. **Philipp H. Fluri** was a co-founder and long-time deputy director of the Geneva Centre for Security Sector Governance (DCAF; earlier Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces) and the founder and executive director of DCAF Brussels. He was subsequently an Executive-in-Residence at the Geneva Centre of Security Policy and the Sergio de Mello Chair at the Seton Hall University School of Diplomacy and International Relations. He is currently a professor in the Department of International Affairs at the Wenzao Ursuline University (WZU) in Kaohsiung, Taiwan. *E-mail*: drphilippfluri@gmail.com

Political Analysis or Fortune-Telling by Crystal-Ball? Western Think Tanks' Challenges with Forecasting Putin's War

Olena Davlikanova [1] *and Larysa Kompantseva* [2]

[1]   *Sumy State University, https://int.sumdu.edu.ua/en*

[2]   *National Academy of the Security Service of Ukraine, Kyiv, Ukraine, http://www.academy.ssu.gov.ua*

Abstract: This article analyzes major western think tanks' forecasts, experts' opinions, and US and UK media content regarding the future of Ukraine-Russia relationships in the year preceding Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine on February 24, 2022. Though the Russian-Ukrainian war has been ongoing since the occupation of Crimea and quasi-republics ("Donetsk and Luhansk People's Republics") were established in 2014, not many political analysts foresaw the coming of the bloodiest and most devastating war since WWII. At the same time, Big Data content analysis of US and UK media demonstrated the presence of markers of an approaching full-scale invasion. Correct-based estimation of the likelihood of a Russian invasion of Ukraine, as well as Ukraine's willingness and ability to protect its sovereignty, was crucial for shaping the appropriate response of the Collective West.

Keywords: war, conflict, full-scale invasion, escalation, Russia, Ukraine, political analysis, content analysis, big data.

Introduction

The war in Ukraine revealed the ugly face of a Russia resembling a quasi-empire. This image was barely discussed in academia. The full-scale invasion resulted in mass murder, sexual violence, total destruction of civilian towns and villages,

"death lists" of volunteers, activists, decision-makers, Ukrainian service personnel, kidnapping, torture, forceful displacement to the Russian Federation, child trafficking, and displacement in occupied zones, in other words, many bigger and smaller Buchas.[1] Yet, according to one of the surveys anonymously conducted among political analysts [2] less than a year before the invasion, *only one* analyst predicted it.

Why did the world not notice the approach of the bloodiest conflict since 1945? What made a few see the future clearly, and what made the others ridicule such predictions? How come Polish politicians had been called "obsessed with Russia" for more than a decade for warning the West about a possible "resurrection" of the USSR with Russia's ambition to be a superpower and inclinations toward aggression? [3] Timothy Snyder's 2018 book *The Road to Unfreedom* was not followed by a serious academic and political discussion that might have led to taking effective preventive measures. The European Union came to the conclusion that "the vision of a common space from Lisbon to Vladivostok has not materialised" [4] only in the eighth year after the violation of the territorial integrity of Ukraine and several preceding military interventions in other countries.

Unfortunately, February 24, 2022, revealed that too many political analysts were no more useful than mediums with crystal balls. This demonstrates the power of oft-repeated narratives to blind those who tell them and who listen to them to other possibilities.

Bucha had a preamble. For years Russian political elites and their propaganda machines had been dehumanizing Ukrainians and fostering a spirit of Russian superiority that laid the groundwork for the atrocities there. Dmytro Kuleba, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine, successfully summarized this trend: "Bucha was not enabled in one day. For many years, Russian political elites and propaganda have been inciting hatred, dehumanizing Ukrainians, nurturing Russian superiority, and laying the ground for these atrocities. I encourage scholars around the globe to research what led to Bucha." [5]

---

1   A town in Kyiv oblast where the Russian army committed almost all possible war crimes, "'They Killed People Systematically': Bucha Residents Allege War Crimes by Expelled Russian Forces," *Radio Free Europe / Radio Liberty*, www.youtube.com/watch?v=HaCD0XlxYgA.

2   Maksym Khylko, "Ukraine–Russia: Is Conflict-Free Coexistence Possible? Results of the Expert Survey," *Friedrich Ebert Stiftung*, December 2021, accessed July 13, 2022, http://library.fes.de/pdf-files/bueros/ukraine/18808.pdf.

3   Noted by Krzysztof Gawkowski, Parliamentary leader of Lewica, at a meeting with European social democrats in March 2022.

4   "Russia: Speech by High Representative/Vice-President Josep Borrell at the EP Debate on His Visit to Moscow," *The Diplomatic Service of the European Union*, February 9, 2021, accessed July 13, 2022, https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/russia-speech-high-representativevice-president-josep-borrell-ep-debate-his-visit-moscow_en.

5   Liliya Ragutska, "Kuleba: The Massacre Did Not Happen in One Day, for Many Years Russian Propaganda Incited Hatred," *Obozrevatel*, July 10, 2022, accessed July 13,

It is worrisome that despite so much effort invested into understanding the roots and features of fascism, its rise in Eurasia was either overlooked or intentionally ignored. We do not intend to dive into narrative analysis in the framework of this article, as it should be a part of a more comprehensive, deeper, but necessary study. However, we do intend to scrutinize the political analysts (in the first section of this article) and the media content of the United States and the United Kingdom (in the second part).

Assessments of Western Think Tanks and Political Analysts on the Eve of the Full-Scale Invasion

The actions of most Western governments shortly before and several weeks after the invasion demonstrated a great amount of disbelief in the ability of Ukraine to preserve its sovereignty due to the state of its armed forces [6] and a shock that one of the worst possible and least anticipated scenarios was realized. "The Ukrainian military may not be able to hold back even a limited Russian push across the line of contact." [7] The story of 5 000 helmets offered by Germany as assistance [8] is a bright example of the judgments dominating the discourse regarding policies to be implemented to support Ukraine back then. The appeals to reconsider the EU leading country's pacifistic policy as a preventive measure were not heard, although it could have had "the dual effect of reducing Ukrainian losses and increasing costs for the Russian military by forcing them to expend more munitions and lose more hardware." [9] The time wasted was not accounted for in hours or minutes, but human lives and hundreds of millions of losses in infrastructure.[10]

2022, https://war.obozrevatel.com/ukr/kuleba-bucha-trapilasya-ne-za-odin-den-protyagom-bagatoh-rokiv-rosijska-propaganda-rozpalyuvala-nenavist.htm.

[6] Dan Peleschuk, "Ukraine's Military Poses a Tougher Challenge for Russia than in 2014," *Politico*, April 14, 2021, accessed July 13, 2022, https://www.politico.eu/article/ukraines-military-poses-a-tougher-challenge-for-russia-than-in-2014.

[7] Eugene Rumer and Andrew S. Weiss, "Ukraine: Putin's Unfinished Business," *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, November 12, 2021, accessed July 13, 2022, https://carnegieendowment.org/2021/11/12/ukraine-putin-s-unfinished-business-pub-85771.

[8] Daniel Boffey and Philip Oltermann, "Germany's Offer to Ukraine of 5,000 Helmets is 'Joke', Says Vitali Klitschko," *The Guardian*, January 26, 2022, accessed July 13, 2022, https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/jan/26/russia-ukraine-germany-under-pressure-to-back-eu-military-training-mission-in-ukraine.

[9] Dumitru Minzarari and Susan Stewart, "The Logic of Defence Assistance to Ukraine: A Strategic Assessment," *German Institute for International and Security Affairs*, July 9, 2021, accessed July 13, 2022, https://doi.org/10.18449/2021C42.

[10] Dan Bilefsky and Nick Cumming-Bruce, "Ukraine's Prime Minister Says Rebuilding Will Cost $750 Billion," *The New York Times*, July 5, 2022, accessed July 13, 2022, https://www.nytimes.com/2022/07/05/world/europe/ukraines-prime-minister-says-rebuilding-will-cost-750-billion.html.

The West's response was shaped by previous estimations of (1) the likelihood of a Russian invasion of Ukraine, (2) the assessments of Ukraine's capabilities and fighting spirit, and (3) Russia's military capabilities and motivation to achieve its goals. Despite the efforts undertaken by Ukraine since 2014, which strengthened the army,[11] the doubts may be understandable. Not only were there many unresolved problems with infrastructure and organization,[12] but there was a significant gap in funding. In 2021 Ukraine spent $5.9 billion on defense, while Russia spent $65.9 billion. Predictions did not account for the almost unimaginable scope of corruption in the Russian army or the determination of Ukrainians to defend their homeland. These unaccounted-for factors have thus far proven crucial.

So, what were the predictions of the Western think tanks and political analysts a year before the invasion? For the purpose of this article, we will look into assessments presented by major think tanks (from countries with significant influence on the policies of the Collective West)[13] and views of political analysis provided to decision-making institutions.

First of all, it should be noted that the overall assessment of political, economic, social, military, historical, and even human factors was pretty well elaborated; however, only a few came to the conclusion that full-scale invasion was the most probable scenario. On the contrary, an in-depth understanding of the consequences and costs prevented the option from being seriously considered.

The expected "losses" of Russia from the invasion were obvious to all the analysts:

- Termination of the recently re-established direct dialogue with the USA (put on hold after the 2014 acts of aggression), which symbolized the recognition of the Russian Federation as a global superpower deciding the fate of the world;
- The impact of the sanctions following the full-scale invasion would be devastating for the Russian economy;
- Significant casualties might cause political issues at home;
- The interpretation of the war in Ukraine as civil and the presentation of Russia as a country not being part of the conflict will be dead as a narrative.

---

[11] "Ukrainian Armed Forces," *Congressional Research Service*, January 26, 2022, accessed July 13, 2022, https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/IF/IF11862.

[12] Glen Grant, "Seven Years of Deadlock: Why Ukraine's Military Reforms Have Gone Nowhere, and How the US Should Respond," *The Jamestown Foundation*, July 16, 2021, accessed July 13, 2022, https://jamestown.org/program/why-the-ukrainian-defense-system-fails-to-reform-why-us-support-is-less-than-optimal-and-what-can-we-do-better.

[13] Countries have been chosen based on the level of assistance provided to Ukraine and their influence on the formation of policies of the Collective West.

The factors contributing to the likelihood of invasion were excessively discussed but eventually dismissed. Among them were:

- The self-confidence of the Kremlin and Putin due to a demonstrated lack of EU political will and efforts to decrease its dependence on Russian hydrocarbons and pursuit a green future; the EU's fear of inflation and recession of the European economy caused by the energy crisis if severe sanctions, including gas and oil embargo, are imposed; current high gas prices; the USA's focus on COVID-19 and China and, in the eyes of Kremlin, lack of a real European leader and no force that could challenge Russia;

- Russian leadership's belief that the world was evolving from a unipolar to a polycentric international system ("transitioning away from the West and towards the Non-West" [14]) and expected support from China;

- The Collective West's failure to react to a series of Russian geopolitical and military advances in the past two decades; modest sanctions were imposed on Russia after the annexation of Crimea, thus signaling the West's lack of commitment to sacrifice its economic interests to protect Ukraine; Ukraine's way to NATO was already blocked due to the ongoing so-called Donbas conflict, and this hinders Ukraine's alignment with the West;

- The assumption that NATO would not support Ukraine militarily due to a lack of Article 5 guarantees and the organization's inability to even "successfully defend the territory of its most exposed members" (as has become apparent in a series of war games);[15]

- Hundreds of years of shared history, widespread family and business ties among the populations of the two countries, and decades of russification of Ukraine;

- Putin's desire to leave a legacy as a "gatherer of Russian lands" (instead of the leader remembered for losing Ukraine) – the first ruler since the mid-Twentieth century to expand the country's territory and restore Russia's dominion over lands that were part of its historic empire. This goal was viewed not just as merely geopolitical but also as a generational, strategic, and personal aspiration;[16]

---

[14] Samuel Charap et al., *Russian Grand Strategy: Rhetoric and Reality*, Research Report (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2021), https://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/research_reports/RR4200/RR4238/RAND_RR4238.pdf.

[15] Doug Bandow, "Why on Earth Would Russia Attack the Baltics?" *CATO Institute*, February 7, 2016, accessed July 13, 2022, https://www.cato.org/commentary/why-earth-would-russia-attack-baltics#.

[16] Rumer and Weiss, "Ukraine: Putin's Unfinished Business."

- Well-financed information campaigns aiming to destabilize the EU by financing right-wing and populist parties of European countries, as well as think tanks, experts, and individual politicians.

Table 1. Assessments of Western Think Tanks and Political Analysts on the Eve of the Full-Scale Invasion (2021).

Institution / Expert	Assessment	Summary
Belgium		
Martin Russell (European Parliamentary Research Service)	"In spring 2021, many observers dismissed Russia's threatening moves as mere 'sabre-rattling,' possibly as an attempt to force concessions in the stalemated Donbas conflict. This time again, there are links to the Donbas situation … On the other hand, further talks may simply give him more time to prepare an attack. According to some, the worst-case scenario could even see fighting spreading to other European countries." [17]	Likely
Michael Emerson (Centre for European Policy Studies)	"Another reading of the Kremlin's possible tactics is that they are essentially opportunistic … At this point, one may assume that Kremlin strategists are waiting for the opportunities that their current threats may create, keeping all options open. For sure, they would prefer to achieve their objective of a compliant regime in Kyiv without military action. But nobody knows what opportunities may arise – not excluding further territorial gains for Russia, if achievable at low cost … But while such operations are presumably among the options being prepared by Russian military planners, maybe the Kremlin is indeed just trying to use its threats to deliver other objectives, preferably without war." [18]	Relatively likely

---

[17] Martin Russell, "Is Russia about to Start a New War in Ukraine?" *European Parliamentary Research Service*, December 16, 2021, accessed July 13, 2022, https://epthink tank.eu/2021/12/16/is-russia-about-to-start-a-new-war-in-ukraine.

[18] Michael Emerson, "With Russia Threatening Ukraine with War, What Should the EU Do?" *Centre for European Policy Studies*, April 21, 2021, accessed July 13, 2022, www.ceps.eu/with-russia-threatening-ukraine-with-war-what-should-the-eu-do.

Germany		
Dumitru Minzarari, **Susan Stewart** (German Institute for International and Security Affairs)	"… the conflict is likely to linger for decades, leading to thousands of additional casualties and a higher risk of military escalation." [19]	Possible in a long-term perspective
Gustav Gressel (European Council on Foreign Relations)	"There are good reasons to question Putin's seriousness about preparing for an invasion, despite the ostentatious military measures he has taken to get ready for one … Putin may be attempting a strategic misdirection that impales the West in a diplomatic process and military planning cycle that will keep it unprepared to meet his preferred, wily, and more subtle next move. Putin benefits greatly by focusing attention on the risk of war and prompting the current US scramble to defuse and de-escalate this crisis that he invented. If Putin is threatening military action to misdirect, then the West's concessions will feed directly into his non-military efforts to achieve his objectives of changing the geopolitical orientation of Ukraine from West to East and weakening NATO. Putin's 'concession' may be nothing more than not invading Ukraine. If he never intended to invade Ukraine, he will have received quite a lot while giving up almost nothing." [20]	Unlikely from a short-term perspective
Susan Stewart (German Institute for International and Security Affairs)	Russia wants to destabilize the situation in eastern Ukraine. "If Russian leadership intended this as a test, then the Kremlin no doubt saw that it did indeed garner a response from the West." [21]	Unlikely from a short-term perspective

---

19 Minzarari and Stewart, "The Logic of Defence Assistance to Ukraine."

20 Frederick W. Kagan et al, "Forecast Series: Putin's Likely Course of Action in Ukraine, Putin's Military Options" (Washington, DC: Institute for the Study of War and the Critical Threats Project, December 2021), https://www.understandingwar.org/sites/default/files/Ukraine%20Invasion%20Forecast%20Series%20Part%202%20ISW%20CT%20December%202021.pdf.

21 Elena Barysheva and Alexander Savitsky, "Is Russia about to Launch an Attack in Eastern Ukraine?" *DW*, April 8, 2021, accessed July 13, 2022, https://www.dw.com/en/is-russia-about-to-launch-a-fresh-offensive-in-eastern-ukraine/a-57127207.

	The United Kingdom	
Keir Giles, (Chatham House, The Royal Institute of International Affairs)	Based on past performance, it is reasonable for Moscow to hope that at least some of the treaty (new security treaties with the US and NATO) proposals will be accepted. And there are plenty of options for attacking Ukraine that are less costly, and more manageable, than another land invasion … Western leaders have a track record of accepting Russia's demands through being terrified of the alternative. By constantly driving home warnings of nuclear escalation – repeated even in the texts of the treaties – Russia is trying to panic the West into rolling back its own security as a preferable alternative to open warfare … Russia does not want its demands punted off into the long grass of lengthy negotiations – the last thing a conman wants is for his victim to have time to go away and think about it. But the urgency also reflects the limited time Russia can keep large numbers of troops on the Ukrainian border pretending to be about to invade. By presenting all its demands at once, Moscow could get traction with at least some of them … It seems likely the troops opposite Ukraine – and others on the move across the country – are ready for a fight if necessary. But it is hard to see how rolling tanks across the border would serve Russia's aims when far cheaper and more controllable options exist for inflicting damage on Ukraine.[22]	Highly unlikely
	USA	
Eugene Rumer, Andrew Weiss (Carnegie Endowment for International Peace)	"Kremlin could stage a rapid military onslaught to break the back of the Ukrainian military and force it to retreat behind the Dnieper River. This would position the Kremlin to control what is commonly referred to as 'left-bank Ukraine,' including the historical part of Kyiv. Presumably, the Kremlin might even try to install a puppet government in Kyiv and declare it 'mission accomplished.' But there is abundant reason to be skeptical about whether the Kremlin is eager to take on the long-term task of occupying and administering such a vast territory.	Possible, but unlikely

---

[22] Keir Giles, "Putin does not Need to Invade Ukraine to Get His Way," *Chatham House*, The Royal Institute of International Affairs, December 21, 2021, accessed July 13, 2022, www.chathamhouse.org/2021/12/putin-does-not-need-invade-ukraine-get-his-way.

	Ukrainian forces and insurgent groups would almost certainly seek to make any mission along these lines as costly as possible. Even if presented with a fait accompli, the Biden administration would likely find great receptivity in Western Europe for steps to punish the Kremlin and reassure NATO allies worried about further Russian moves." [23]	
John E. Herbst Senior Director (Eurasia Center), Former US Ambassador to Ukraine	"Russia's failure in the East of Ukraine motivates it to intimidate Ukraine and test the West hoping to get concession from Ukraine and USA in negotiations on Donbass." [24]	Unlikely from a short-term perspective
Samuel Charap, **Dara Massicot** (RAND Corporation)	It appears that Russia believes divisions would be needed in the case of a larger war with Ukraine. Russia views Ukraine as an ongoing source of instability for years to come. Russian expeditionary capabilities will remain limited through 2025 and beyond because Russia lacks key pillars for an expeditionary force, such as sufficient strategic lift or a foreign basing network. Russia might revise its military doctrine in the coming years to bring it into alignment with Moscow's recent resource decisions. If recent military behaviors are accurate indicators, then such a revision would include a greater emphasis on large-scale interstate military clashes.[25]	Possible in a mid-term perspective

Markers of Russia's Full-Scale Invasion of Ukraine in the Media in the USA and the United Kingdom

Research Methodology

This study uses the Attack Index [26] information and analytical service for processing large volumes of information (Big Data) from open Internet sources. The service allows for determining the degree of information resonance on selected

---

23 Rumer and Weiss, "Ukraine: Putin's Unfinished Business."

24 "Will Russia Invade Ukraine Again?" *Atlantic Council*, December 2, 2021, accessed July 13, 2022, https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/event/will-russia-invade-ukraine-again.

25 Charap et al., *Russian Grand Strategy: Rhetoric and Reality*.

26 "Attack Index," https://attackindex.com/uk/golovna.The service was created by a Ukrainian team led by Ellina Shnurko-Tabakova.

topics. The service uses English-, Russian-, and Ukrainian-language monitoring databases collected over the past 25 years, in particular: social networks (Facebook, Instagram, LiveJournal, LiveInternet, Vkontakte, Odnoklassniki, Telegram, Twitter, Youtube, Reddit, Weibo, Rutube, Medium, ArXiv); more than 10,000 sites (media, blogs, forums); TV and radio content.

Attack Index is an integral indicator of the level of information danger, which takes into account many factors: the presence of information activity, the activity of possible opponents/ competitors, the deviation of the average information picture (background), the presence of information operations and the stages of their development, the retrospective and dynamics of the negative tone of publications, as well as the degree of chaotic processes. The service provides opportunities to search for messages on topics of interest in global networks; track information flows (stories), relevant topics, events, and processes; determine the dynamics of information flows; establish the dynamics of the tonality of publications; determine anomalous and critical components in the dynamics of thematic information flows; define the main events and objects of the thematic flow of information; visualize relations among monitored objects; forecast the development of the situation.

Table 2. TOP 20 Publication Sources for the Whole Period of Query.

USA		United Kingdom	
[1] Yahoo News	226	[1] Daily Express	80
[2] GlobalSecurity.org	43	[2] Daily Mail	61
[3] The Hill	42	[3] Independent.co.uk	55
[4] ABC news.com	36	[4] International Business Times	37
[5] WTOP	31	[5] The Guardian	23
[6] Stars and Stripes	29	[6] Daily Mirror	18
[7] New York Times	28	[7] The Sun	17
[8] Newsweek	26	[8] Telegraph	16
[9] Voice of America	24	[9] BBC	10
[10] Seattle Times	24	[10] Sky News	7
[11] Associated Press News	23	[11] The Times	7
[12] Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty	23	[12] Byline Times	6
[13] FOX News	20	[13] openDemocracy	6
[14] SFGate.com	20	[14] Economist.com	6
[15] WIVB-TV	17	[15] Scotsman.com News	5
[16] Washington Times	17	[16] EU Today	3
[17] The Wall Street Journal	14	[17] MiddleEastEye.net	2
[18] FOX 11	14	[18] Chatham House	2
[19] Los Angeles Times	12	[19] Bellingcat	2
[20] MarketWatch	12	[20] RUSI	1

Decoding Narratives and Messages in the Media

In order to determine if there were markers of a possible Russian invasion of Ukraine in the media of the United States and the United Kingdom, the keywords "war, Russian Federation / Russia, Ukraine" were chosen for analysis. Content analysis proved the relevance of the topic "War of Russia in Ukraine" in the media space of the United States and the United Kingdom in 2021: the level of threat awareness was 6 points in the United States and 8 – in the United Kingdom, which indicates the importance of signals about the potential aggression of the Russian Federation. The number of publications on the topic was 662 units in the US media and 164 in the United Kingdom. The probable coverage of the audience was 732 167 and 159 777 people, respectively. Unique content was formed mainly by official media and accounted for 9.19 % in the USA and 12.6 % in the United Kingdom, which is also an indicator of the urgency of the topic (see Table 2).

Information about a possible invasion of the Russian Federation into Ukraine appeared regularly in the media of the USA and the United Kingdom. Monitored media published such information several times a day in 87.8 % and 47.3 % of the cases, respectively (Figure 1).
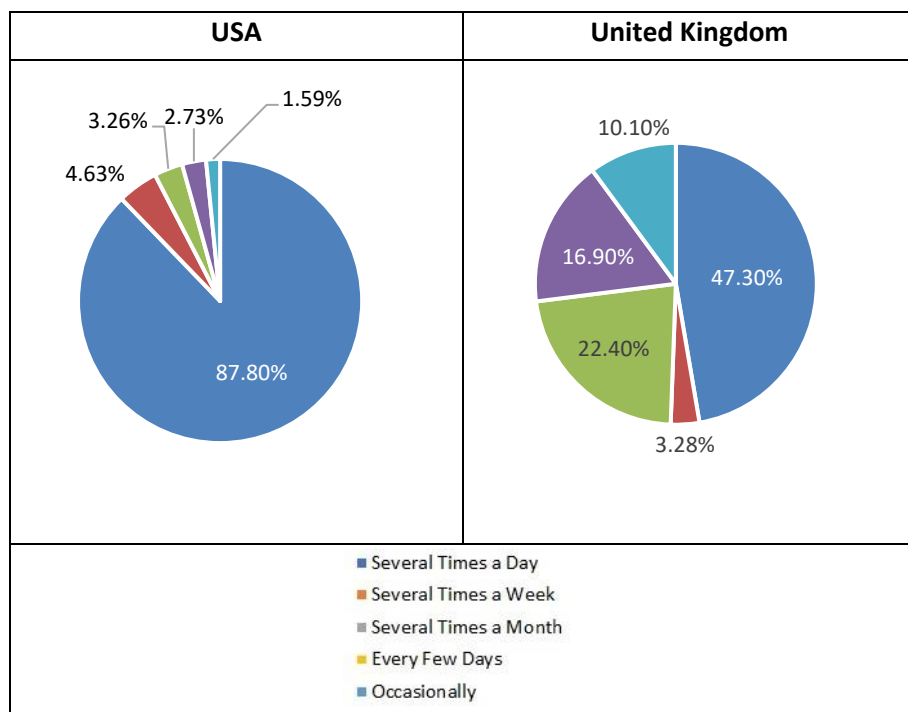
Figure 1: Frequency of Publications by the Keywords "War of the Russian Federation in Ukraine" in the Mediaspace of the USA and United Kingdom in 2021.

The topic was most actively discussed in the timeslots of 04/02/2021 – 04/26/2021, 06/14/2021 – 06/17/2021, and 11/24/2021 – 02/24/2022 (Figure 2). In these periods, media presented key narratives regarding a possible invasion of the Russian Federation into Ukraine.
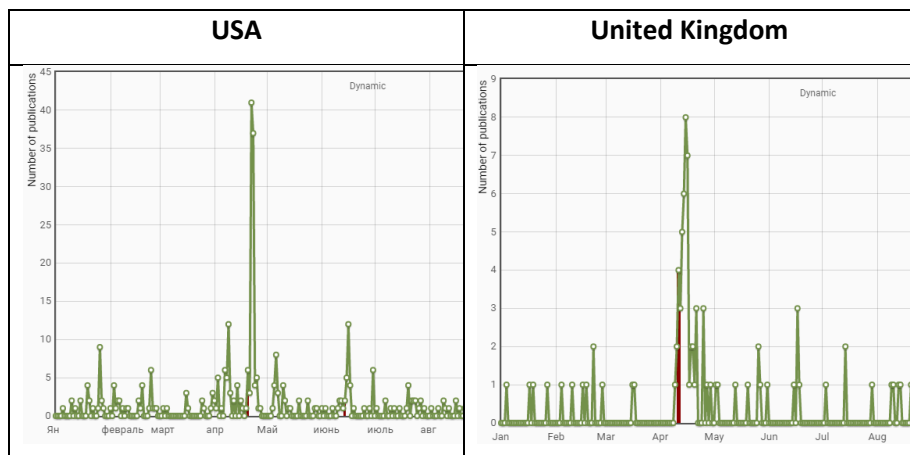
Figure 2: Number of Publications by Dates within the Period of Study.

From April 2 to April 26, 2021, the *National Interest* (USA) introduced the question, "Is war possible in Europe as a result of the escalation of the situation in Ukraine by Putin's Russia?" [27] The publication analyzed the situation near the borders of Ukraine and in Crimea, pointing to "the highest military deployment of Russian army in Ukrainian borders ever" and assessed it as "yet another unprovoked escalation in Moscow's ongoing campaign to undermine and destabilize Ukraine."

The narrative, recorded in the form of a question, testifies to the presence of two contradictory opinions – fears about the possibility of thawing the conflict and denial of Russia's preparations for a full-scale invasion of Ukraine:

> The buildup has come amid a spike in hostilities in eastern Ukraine, where Russian-backed separatists have been locked in a simmering war with Ukraine's US and European-backed military since 2014. The increase in the violence in eastern Ukraine has raised fears internationally of a possible flare up in the so-called frozen conflict. While US military officials haven't seen an-

---

[27] Andreas Umland, "A War in Europe? Why Putin's Russia Is Escalating in Ukraine," *The National Interest*, April 20, 2021, accessed July 13, 2022, https://nationalinterest.org/blog/buzz/war-europe-why-putin%E2%80%99s-russia-escalating-ukraine-183200.

ything yet to suggest Russia is gearing up for an imminent cross-border incursion into Ukraine, the United States, the UK and European states have criticized Moscow for the military buildup." [28]

The British *Daily Express* more categorically declares the possibility of a Russian attack on Ukraine in "Russia 'on Doorstep of War' with Ukraine after Largest Movement of Troops in 50 Years," [29] although the phrase "on the doorstep of war," enclosed in quotation marks, indicates some doubt about a full-scale conflict.

The narrative "Is war possible in Europe as a result of the escalation of the situation in Ukraine by Putin's Russia?" is broadcast with two messages.

Message 1: "*The open build-up of the Russian military force – a show of strength or preparation for something more sinister?*" also shows doubts about a full-scale invasion of the Russian Federation into Ukraine. "In Washington, the CIA director told Congress that it remains unclear whether the build-up is a show of force or preparation for something more ominous;" [30] "The high visibility has cost Russia any element of surprise, leading analysts to minimize but not rule out the possibility of an actual attack;" [31] "Dr. McGlynn insists the build-up of troops and arms in eastern Ukraine is Putin 'showing off' and doubts the Russian strongman would risk a full-scale conflict. She said: 'Putin would rather manipulate and fool around than go into full-on war.' 'War is a big risk,' 'Putin flexes muscles amid Ukraine war threat';" [32] "The Russian ambassador to the UK has warned of a 'bloodbath' in Ukraine – and vowed to respond if Kyiv moves troops to the Donbas region." [33]

The presentation of the narrative and messages as questions indicates the uncertainty of the analysts' position regarding the Russian Federation's possible

---

[28] Alexandra Odynova, "Photos Show Russia's Military Buildup near Ukraine as Putin Claims Dominion over More of the Region's Sea and Air," *CBS News*, April 21, 2021, https://www.cbsnews.com/news/russia-ukraine-military-buildup-crimea-putin-black-sea-airspace/.

[29] Dylan Donnelly, "Russia 'on Doorstep of War' with Ukraine after Largest Movement of Troops in 50 Years," *Daily Express*, April 15, 2021, accessed July 13, 2022, https://www.express.co.uk/news/world/1423298/russia-news-Ukraine-doorstep-of-war-usa-Vladimir-Putin-Crimea-troops-ont.

[30] Odynova, "Photos Show Russia's Military Buildup near Ukraine."

[31] Andrew E. Kramer, "In Russia, a Military Buildup That Can't Be Missed," *The New York Times*, April 16, 2021, accessed July 13, 2022, https://www.nytimes.com/2021/04/16/world/europe/russia-ukraine-troops.html.

[32] Mark Hodge, "Empire State of Mind. Putin Is Threatening to Invade Ukraine 'to Humiliate' Biden as He Looks to Reassert Russia's 'Superpower' Status," *The Sun*, April 15, 2021, accessed July 13, 2022, https://www.thesun.co.uk/news/14659341/putin-ukraine-humiliate-biden.

[33] Tariq Tahir, "Ready to Strike. Chilling Satellite Pics Show 'Biggest-Ever' Build-Up of Russian Forces on Ukraine Border with Thousands Ready to Invade," *The Sun*, April 19, 2021, accessed July 13, 2022, https://www.thesun.co.uk/news/14693649/satellite-pics-biggest-build-up-russian-forces-ukraine.

aggression. The demonstration of force was evaluated as a signal to the West to hear and consider the demands of the Russian Federation.

> The high visibility has cost Russia any element of surprise, leading analysts to minimize but not rule out the possibility of an actual attack. More likely, they say, the buildup is intended as a warning to the West not to take Russia for granted. [34]

Message 2: "*Putin wants to conclude an agreement with the West regarding the recognition of the sphere of interests of the Russian Federation*" also sounds vague since it is not specified which "sphere of interest" is meant. This message arose after Putin's annual speech at the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation on April 22, 2021. In this speech, Putin demonstrated to the world the strategy for the future war [35] – disrespect for Ukraine and the countries of the West and disregard for the laws of warfare in order to satisfy one's own ambitions. In his annual address, Putin compared the United States to the lame but arrogant Bengal tiger Shere Khan, from Rudyard Kipling's *The Jungle Book*. He described US allies as a gang of yelping Tabaqui-cowardly and despised golden jackals who attack Russia with "fake" accusations and impose sanctions while doing Shere Khan's bidding. Later Putin "once again" "called on the West to begin discussing strategic weapons and global stability without confrontation. Indeed, taking into account non-strategic (tactical) nuclear weapons, which no one has ever verifiably counted, Russia may have more (maybe twice as many overall) than all the other official or unofficial nuclear powers taken together." [36]

But the demands put forward by the Russian Federation to the West remain unclear. Putin warns of metaphorical uncertain "red lines" – "President Putin has warned western allies that they will pay a heavy price if they cross a 'red line' with Russia as tensions mount over its military build-up on the Ukraine border." But the concept of "red lines" is very vague and can be expanded as the Russian Federation wishes.[37]

The same strategy is used by Putin in Ukraine today – after Bucha, Irpen, and Mariupol, Russia accuses Ukraine of Nazism and the West – of trying to bring Russia down. Therefore, the sphere of interest of the Russian Federation is an undefined concept, the boundaries of which can expand infinitely.

From June 14 – June 17, 2022, in the context of the Biden-Putin summit in Geneva initiated by the US president, the narrative "*The relationship between*

---

[34] Andrew E. Kramer, "Putin Warns of a Russian 'Red Line' the West Will Regret Crossing," *The New York Times*, April 21, 2021, accessed July 13, 2022, www.nytimes.com/2021/04/21/world/europe/russia-putin-ukraine-navalny.html.

[35] "Mondi in Progress 29-04-2021," *The Science of Where Magazine*, April 29, 2021, accessed July 13, 2022, https://www.thescienceofwheremagazine.it/2021/04/29/mondi-in-progress-29-04-2021.

[36] "Mondi in Progress 29-04-2021."

[37] Kramer, "Putin Warns of a Russian 'Red Line' the West Will Regret Crossing."

the Russian Federation and Western countries will depend on the Russian Federation's compliance with international norms" was formed. The US media of this period recorded the "battle of messages" of all interested parties [38]: "In 2008, NATO promised that Ukraine and Georgia would eventually be welcome to join the alliance despite protests from Russia" (NATO, 2008) – "The Kremlin has signaled that Ukraine's NATO bid is fraught with a new, hot conflict in Europe" (Russia) – Washington definitely doesn't want war" (USA) – "Russia bolstered its forces near Ukraine and warned Kyiv that it could intervene militarily if Ukrainian authorities try to retake the rebel-controlled east" (Russia).

Russia's messages like "The Kremlin has signaled that Ukraine's NATO bid is fraught with a new, hot conflict in Europe" and "Russia bolstered its forces near Ukraine and warned Kyiv that it could intervene militarily if Ukrainian authorities try to retake the rebel-controlled east" initially created dissonance in the communication of the Summit, as they contained manipulative components – irrelevant situations as a reason for conflicts (Ukraine's NATO bid, Ukrainian authorities try to retake the rebel-controlled east). Therefore, the messages of the Russian Federation were received by the Western community with a shift in emphasis, which gave hope for peace. Russian messages should have been decoded as follows: "The Kremlin has signaled about new, hot conflict in Europe," "Russia bolstered its forces near Ukraine and warned Kyiv that it could intervene militarily." Therefore, the narrative "The relationship between the Russian Federation and the United States will depend on the observance of international norms by the Russian Federation" could not be accepted by Russia since the decision to invade Ukraine had already been made. Manipulative pretexts were used for it, which worked well for the domestic audience of the Russian Federation, if not for the international community.

On November 12, 2021, a narrative that lost relevance only with the start of the war on February 24, 2022, was verbalized –"The Russian attack on Ukraine will be a fatal mistake," "US warns allies that Russia could invade Ukraine as tensions in the region soar," [39] "White House has warned European allies to prepare for a Russian INVASION of Ukraine with further border military build-up and tensions over gas supplies," [40] "Why Russia could INVADE Ukraine: US warns tens of

---

[38] Vladimir Isachenkov and Yuras Karmanau, "Some US Allies Near Russia Are Wary of Biden-Putin Summit," *The Seattle Times*, June 13, 2021, accessed July 13, 2022, https://www.seattletimes.com/nation-world/nation/some-us-allies-near-russia-are-wary-of-biden-putin-summit.

[39] William Walker, "US Warns Allies that Russia Could Invade Ukraine as Tensions in the Region Soar," *Daily Mirror*, November 12, 2021, accessed July 13, 2022, https://www.mirror.co.uk/news/us-news/warns-allies-russia-could-invade-25440116.

[40] Chris Pleasance and Elizabeth Elkind, "REVEALED: White House Has Warned European Allies to Prepare for a Russian INVASION of Ukraine with Further Border Military Build-up and Tensions over Gas Supplies," *Daily Mail*, November 11, 2021, accessed July 13, 2022, https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-10192833/White-House-warns-Europe-prepare-Russian-INVASION-Ukraine-border-military-build-up.html.

thousands of troops at border." [41] On November 24, 2021, the "war of messages" of the Russian Federation ("The use of nuclear weapons is possible," "Russia will not attack Ukraine") and the West ("NATO countries are concerned about a possible Russian attack on Ukraine") was gaining strength:

Russia's defense minister on Tuesday accused US bombers of rehearsing a nuclear strike on Russia from two different directions earlier this month and complained that the planes had come within 20 km (12.4 miles) of the Russian border. But the Pentagon said its drills were announced publicly at the time and adhered to international protocols. Moscow's accusation comes at a time of high tension with Washington over Ukraine, with US officials voicing concerns about a possible Russian attack on its southern neighbor – a suggestion the Kremlin has dismissed as false. Moscow has in turn accused the United States, NATO and Ukraine of provocative and irresponsible behavior, pointing to US arms supplies to Ukraine, Ukraine's use of Turkish strike drones against Russian-backed separatists in eastern Ukraine, and NATO military exercises close to its borders. [42]

So, markers of the future full-scale invasion of the Russian Federation into Ukraine were present in the media of the USA and the United Kingdom in 2021. The transformation of the modality of narratives from interrogative ("Is war in Europe possible as a result of the escalation of the situation in Ukraine by Putin's Russia?") to affirmative-prognostic ("The attack of the Russian Federation on Ukraine will be a fatal mistake") should have led analysts to think that Europe is approaching war and needs to take more efficient preventive measures.

Instead of Conclusions. Pricy Possible Miscalculations and Recommendations for the Future

Currently, political scientists are trying to understand why the biggest tragedy of the first quarter of the XXI century was not obvious when military officials and intelligence were pretty outspoken regarding Kremlin's intentions.

The analysis offering a low probability of Russia conducting a full-scale military invasion was not wrong. It was based on observable conditions and implications that held true, at least in appearance, until February. Instead, an alternative view is that something drastic occurred in Kremlin circles between

---

[41] Aliss Higham, "Why Russia Could INVADE Ukraine: US Warns Tens of Thousands of Troops at Border," *Daily Express*, November 12, 2021, accessed July 13, 2022, https://www.express.co.uk/news/world/1520420/russia-invade-ukraine-troops-border-evg.

[42] Andrew Osborn and Phil Stewart, "Moscow Says U.S. Rehearsed Nuclear Strike against Russia This Month," *Reuters*, November 24, 2021, accessed July 13, 2022, https://www.reuters.com/world/russia-notes-significant-increase-us-bomber-activity-east-minister-2021-11-23

January and February 2022, which led to a change in Putin's approach to Ukraine.[43]

We cannot exclude such a possibility, though we believe it is unlikely. If the invasion had been estimated as highly possible, the whole discourse around support for Ukraine and preventive measures might have changed or mitigated the recent course of events. For a long time, it has been obvious that Russia's strategic objective was to subordinate Ukraine. And when the soft power tools, in combination with heavy sponsorship of pro-Russian parties in the Ukrainian Parliament, did not deliver on the goal, Ukraine continued drifting westward even under the pressure of the ongoing war in the East. Then, unable to change Ukraine's foreign policy course, Russia chose the most obvious next step. "If I can't have you, no one can!" [44]

It has never been about NATO but the ability of an ex-Soviet republic to turn into a democratic state with the rule of law and fair elections. These are the two main threats to the Kremlin regime that, for over a decade, has been concentrating enormous resources in the hands of few. At some point, giving up the power becomes suicidal, considering the ways both the power and the riches have been obtained and preserved, including through the revival of the fascist ideas of Ivan Ilyin and encouraging the use of the "best practice" of Soviet totalitarianism.

It would have been beneficial to Russia to have a struggling corrupt semi-democratic Ukraine longing to be taken in the European family with no success as proof of a "mistaken pro-western course." Instead, Russia chose to demonstrate to other smaller countries that it considers its satellites what would be the fate of those unwilling to surrender and subordinate.

The key mistake of western political analysts was to consider the situation following the logic of democratically elected leaders who have to consider a variety of interests and aspirations of the elites and the people, which is not the case in Russia. Those who have been trying to understand the roots of internal processes in this country paid close attention to the policy culture, which by the end of the day outweighed cold calculation (or miscalculation) of one's potency, as well as potential gains and losses.

Violence and dominance as cornerstones of Russian leaders' power may be traced centuries back. The XX century, and especially the 1990s, determined the development of modern Russia, while the neighboring European countries have leaned towards putting human rights and democratic freedoms at the center of their existence. Both the "birth" of the Soviet Union and the Russian Federation are marked with repressions and physical elimination of some groups – political

---

[43] Dumitru Minzarari, "Failing to Deter Russia's War Against Ukraine: The Role of Misperceptions," *German Institute for International and Security Affairs*, April 29, 2022, accessed July 13, 2022, https://www.swp-berlin.org/en/publication/failing-to-deter-russias-war-against-ukraine-the-role-of-misperceptions.

[44] "Without a Dowry," a play by Alexander Ostrovsky.

rivals, national minorities, dissidents, and business competitors. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, criminal organizations have been fighting for resources to survive. Those who survived gradually turned into political and business elites. In a very poor economic environment, when people literally do not always have access to food, the most violent are best rewarded. That is when the approach "the might is right" has become a factor in the formation of the culture of violence that has demonstrated itself in the widespread war crimes against civilians in Ukraine.

The same approach has corrupted foreign policy. Like mobsters "negotiating" mainly in the presence of their armed gangs, Russia does not see the negotiation process as a means to reach a balance of interests. It only tests how powerful the other party is. It is true that "the Russian leadership views talks as the inability to impose one's will since if one has the power, one does not need to talk but instead can act and impose the preferred outcome." [45]

Tragically enough, the rule of President Putin coincided with the gradual healing of the Russian economy, mainly due to the rising prices of natural resources. Mistakenly, a large part of the Russian population saw a causal link between the concentration of power and the improvement in the economic situation. Thus, democracy has become seen by many as anarchy, a prerequisite of economic instability, uncertainty, and weakness. The latter cannot be tolerated. Thus, a significant part of the Russian population that demonstrates its full support or does not oppose the Kremlin's actions is not a victim of propaganda (since many are able but unwilling to get information directly from their relatives or friends in Ukraine) but rather an embodiment of the authoritarian nature of Russian society.

With some exceptions, the expectations in the West that after the first misfortunes of the Russian army in Ukraine and the severe personnel losses, Russian society would react did not come true. The myth or feeling of belonging to something bigger than oneself (the Great Russian Federation, the World Force) turned out to mean more than personal happiness or family well-being for a great part of the population living in relative poverty. Unlike Ukrainians, who cherish the ability to be among the "authors" of the history of modern Ukraine, the majority of Russians remain passive and disengaged from activism and politics. Thus, the narrative of the enigmatic Russian soul should be reconsidered and focused on the question: "How come over 140 million people living at a 'gas station masquerading as a country' [46] do so little to make it a comfortable home?"

The answer to this question will explain a lot about the logic of the current political decisions of the Russian Federation. Though seen by some western observers as a declining power, the regime, whose ultimate agenda is self-preservation, may adapt to new realities shaped by Western sanctions, as it is not being

---

[45] Minzarari, "Failing to Deter Russia's War Against Ukraine."
[46] Senator John McCain.

challenged enough by the population, not to mention the weak, fragmented civil society.

Western political analysts should not have indulged in wishful thinking or projected western mentality onto a foreign one. When it comes to Russia, a totalitarian state in a world in need of hydrocarbons, it should be remembered that force is the first and foremost argument.

And the last and an obvious but a neglected fact of life: while most observers considered Putin a rational actor who would be unwilling to take risks when stakes are that high, they should have taken into account that "power tends to corrupt, and absolute power corrupts absolutely." [47]

To prevent future mistakes in assessing potential military threats, political scientists and analysts need to:

1. Not base conclusions on their wishful thinking or project one country's mentality and political culture onto another. This is the first step to a fatal error.

2. Take into account the peculiarities of national culture – the historical tendency of its carriers to replace constructive solutions with aggression.

3. Investigate markers of impending conflict in the media. Changing narratives, messages, and lexical signals are unmistakable evidence of the real situation.

4. Hear alternative voices. A marginal position can be credible.

5. Study the situation systematically – different approaches and methodologies will provide a reliable result.

---

[47] Lord Acton (1834–1902) in a letter to Bishop Mandell Creighton.

Disclaimer

About the Authors

Olena Davlikanova, Associate Professor of Sumy State University and a political analyst with over a decade of experience of work in international foundations like NDI and FES. https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8536-3959.
E-mail: elena.davlikanova@gmail.com

Larysa Kompantseva, Doctor of Philology, Professor, Head of the Department of Theory and Practice of Translation at the National Academy of Security Service of Ukraine (Kyiv, Ukraine), is one of the founders of scientific schools on Internet Linguistics and StratCom in Ukraine. Recently she has been involved in research programs on the linguistic expertise of social networks using Big Data tools and the communication sphere as a component of national security.
https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7902-9209.
E-mail: larafkom@gmail.com

Russia's Gambit to Redefine the Current World Order

Erik Fagergren

U.S. European Command Headquarters, https://www.eucom.mil/

Abstract: Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, Russia has made iterative changes to its National Security Strategy (NSS) to bolster its position in the world. The initial intent of the NSS was to provide aspirational foreign policy goals and ambitions the Kremlin could work towards. In 2021, President Putin viewed Russia to be in a position to change the Kremlin's status in the world and decided to take action. In addition to publishing the 2021 NSS, President Putin also penned a personal history essay about Russia and Ukraine. President Putin's article provides the Kremlin with a narrative to garner popular domestic support and superficial justification for Russia's actions against Ukraine. The ultimate goal of the NSS is to reestablish the Cold War world order. President Putin is using Ukraine as a means to reassert Russia's position in the world while at the same time attempting to discredit the Euro-Atlantic rules-based order.

Keywords: Russia, Ukraine, world order, great power, President Putin, Donbas, Crimea, NATO, National Security Strategy, special military operation, historical unity of Russians and Ukrainians.

Introduction

Ukraine's freedom has not perished, nor her glory gone. Once again all Ukraine's fate will smile upon. Enemies will perish like dew in the sun. We shall possess all my people a free land of our own. We will lay down soul and body and show that we are one. We will stand together for our freedom, none shall

> *rule our home. Ukraine's freedom has not perished nor her glory gone. We will stand together for our freedom none shall rule our home.*

--Singer Patricia Lee Smith's English rendition of the Ukrainian national anthem [1]

Pavlo Chubynsky, a 19th-Century ethnographer, wrote the poem that would later become the Ukrainian national anthem. The same year he published his poem, 1862, the Russian government arrested and accused Chubynsky of participating in a Ukrainian national movement.[2] The Ukrainian national identity has been a matter of debate for centuries. In the 1920s, the Bolsheviks introduced an indigenization policy to promote local culture, education, and language amongst the republics of the USSR. In Ukraine, the policy of indigenization was called "Ukrainization."[3] Over time, Joseph Stalin feared that Ukrainization could lead to a national identity that would cause Ukraine to seek independence from the Soviet Union. Stalin wrote on August 11, 1932, "At this point the most important thing is Ukraine. The situation in Ukraine is very bad. If we don't take steps now to improve the situation, we may lose Ukraine."[4] Stalin took a two-prong approach to end Ukrainization – agricultural collectivization and the destruction of autonomous Ukrainian institutions (i.e., the Ukrainian Orthodox Church and the Communist Party of Ukraine).[5] The resulting devastation of Stalin's efforts to end Ukrainization is now known as Holodomor.

 Ukraine has once again become "the most important thing" to the Russian Federation, and the Kremlin may lose Ukraine from its sphere of influence. In July 2021, The Russian Federation published two critical documents that outline President Putin's views and the strategy Russia is implementing to retain influence over Ukraine and challenge the West's rules-based system. The first document published on July 2, 2021, was the National Security Strategy (NSS) of the Russian Federation.[6] The second document, which provides an understanding of Ukraine's role in the Russian strategy, is an article President Putin published on

---

[1] Patricia L. Smith, "Patti Smith's English Translation of the Ukrainian National Anthem," *Vogue UA*, March 6, 2022, accessed April 13, 2022, https://vogue.ua/article/culture/muzyka/patti-smit-pereklala-gimn-ukrajini-angliyskoyu.html.

[2] Ivan Katchanovski, Zenon E. Kohut, Bohdan Y. Nebesio, and Myroslav Yurkevich, *Historical Dictionary of Ukraine*, 2nd ed. (Lanham: Scarecrow Press, 2013), https://shron2.chtyvo.org.ua/Zbirnyk_statei/Historical_Dictionary_of_Ukraine_anhl.pdf.

[3] Serhy Yekelchyk, *The Conflict in Ukraine: What Everyone Needs to Know* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, September 2015).

[4] Kateryna Bondar, "The Ukrainian Famine of 1932-1933: Legal Case for Genocide," *Ukrainian Quarterly* 75, no. 3 (2019): 13-19.

[5] Katchanovski, Kohut, Nebesio, and Yurkevich, *Historical Dictionary of Ukraine.*

[6] President of Russia, "О Стратегии Национальной Безопасности Российской Федерации [On the National Security Strategy of the Russian Federation]," Decree #400 of July 2, 2021, accessed August 5, 2021, http://www.kremlin.ru/acts/bank/47046/page/1.

July 12, 2021, titled "On the Historical Unity of Russians and Ukrainians."[7] Understanding the iterative changes in the language of the NSS over time and how President Putin's view of Russian and Ukrainian history nests within that strategy is crucial to deciphering the current objectives of Russia's actions in Ukraine.

To an extent, President Putin announced his intentions during his opening remarks at the October 2021 annual Valdai conference. He began by outlining the idea of now being a time of change – a time to redefine the world order that the West established after the collapse of the Soviet Union.[8] He stated, "The attempt to create [the current world order] after the end of the Cold War based on Western domination failed, as we see. The current state of international affairs is a product of that very failure, and we must learn from this."[9] To challenge the current world order, President Putin is using Ukraine to make his stand. In the words of a scholar, Lilia Shevtsova, "Ukraine has thus become a battleground on which the Kremlin can wage its struggle against Western civilization."[10] Russia's war in Ukraine is an attempt to gain great power status in the current world order while discrediting the Euro-Atlantic rules-based system. Four critical factors explain Russia's efforts to achieve its objective as a global competitor. First, the NSS drives the Kremlin's national priorities and reveals Russia's political and military will to protect its national interests. Second, Russia's success in gaining and maintaining great power status is contingent on the survival of the Putin regime. Third, President Putin is using a historical narrative to counter the Western influence and justify the Kremlin's actions in "historical Russian lands." Fourth, Russia's timing to redefine the current world order is based on President Putin's perception of reality.

Background

Current tensions between the West and Russia are at an all-time high. With a force of more than 190,000 Russian troops, President Putin ordered the invasion of Ukraine to seize key cities and depose the Ukrainian government. The threat of severe Western sanctions and diplomatic talks between Russia and the United States, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), and the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) in mid-January 2022 failed to deter the Russian attack. Despite sanctions failing to prevent Russia's invasion of Ukraine, recent Western diplomatic efforts are not the reason behind Russia's actions in Ukraine. It is essential to look back through the Russian perspective of

---

[7] Vladimir Putin, "On the Historical Unity of Russians and Ukrainians," *President of Russia States News Service*, July 12, 2021, http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/66181.

[8] "Valdai Discussion Club Meeting October 2021," *President of Russia*, October 21, 2021, accessed November 5, 2021, http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/66975.

[9] "Valdai Discussion Club Meeting October 2021."

[10] Lilia Shevtsova, "Russia's Ukraine Obsession," *Journal of Democracy* 31, no. 1 (January 2020): 138-147, https://doi.org/10.1353/jod.2020.0011.

world events following the dissolution of the Soviet Union to understand the Kremlin's motives, timing, and end state.

Following the collapse of the Soviet Union, the West viewed the end of the Cold War as a victory for liberal democratic values. Russia, for its part, viewed the end of the Cold War as an opportunity to work with the West as equals in establishing a new world order.[11],[12] As the Russian Ambassador to the United States, Anatoly Antonov, phrased it: "Romantic illusions were dispelled [, and the...] United States immediately began to create a new world order with Russia placed at the outskirts." [13] Since the Cold War ended, many former Soviet states have adopted the Western liberal order taking the necessary steps to become members of the European Union and join NATO. In the minds of Russian leaders, the country was left with a sense of encroachment on an ever-diminishing sphere of influence, geographically and politically, on the world stage. Ambassador Antonov further expounded: "We have come to the point when we have no room to retreat. Military exploration of Ukraine by NATO member states is an existential threat for Russia." [14] The appeal of Western liberal democracy and Russia's inability to stop former Soviet states from aligning with the West caused Russia to take active measures to prevent further Western expansion. Russia began first with Georgia in 2008 and Ukraine in 2014.

In Ukraine, the ongoing Russian military operation produced unexpected results. Up until the Russian invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, Ukrainian military forces had been battling Russian-backed separatists along the border of the self-proclaimed Donetsk and Luhansk Peoples Republics since 2014. Eight years of military confrontation produced few demonstrable gains, and violations of cease-fire agreements occurred daily.[15] As for the Crimean peninsula, which Russia annexed in 2014, President Putin made it abundantly clear there would be no concessions. What makes the conflict in Ukraine different from Russian adventurism in other protracted conflicts like Georgia's Abkhazia and South Ossetia, Moldova's Transnistria, and Nagorno-Karabakh is the Ukrainian response. The fighting in Donbas and the annexation of Crimea galvanized the Ukrainian population further from the Kremlin and closer to the West.

Russia's invasion proved the Ukrainian resolve to maintain their sovereignty as the world watched the determination of the Ukrainian people to defend their homeland. President Putin viewed Ukraine's shift from East to West as a per-

---

[11] Roger E. Kanet, ed., *Routledge Handbook of Russian Security* (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2019).

[12] Anatoly Antonov, "An Existential Threat to Europe's Security Architecture?" *Foreign Policy*, December 30, 2021, https://foreignpolicy.com/2021/12/30/russia-ukraine-nato-threat-security/.

[13] Antonov, "An Existential Threat to Europe's Security Architecture?"

[14] Antonov, "An Existential Threat to Europe's Security Architecture?"

[15] "Ukraine Watchlist," *BBC Monitoring*, February 28, 2022, accessed February 28, 2022.

sonal affront that contradicts what he views as a fraternal unity between Ukrainians and Russians.[16] Ukraine's move further from the Kremlin's influence was not overnight and has been years in the making. The Orange Revolution in 2004 and the Euromaidan in 2014 were two key events that signaled to the Kremlin Ukraine's move away from Russia's influence towards a more Western-based liberal democratic system of governance. Viewing these changes over the years in Ukraine, in other former Soviet states, and domestically, President Putin guided the evolution of the Russian security strategy to confront the changing operational environment.

The National Security Strategy of the Russian Federation

Coming out of the Cold War, the Russian Federation developed a security strategy that evolved with each leader based on political will and military capacity. The current National Security Strategy of the Russian Federation is a planning tool used to define national interests and priorities. It includes the long-term goals and objectives of the Russian Federation to ensure national security and future development.[17] Its purpose is similar to that of a vision statement – to identify an ideal state or status that Russia could work towards achieving. In addition, it defines Russia's overall security policy when grouped with other federal documents like the Military Doctrine, Concept of Foreign Policy, and Information Security Doctrine.[18]

The Kremlin has maintained some form of a national security strategy since the establishment of the Russian Federation in the early 1990s. President Medvedev signed into law the first NSS in 2009. Prior to the 2009 NSS, the guiding document was the National Security Concept of the Russian Federation. By transitioning from a "security concept" to a "security strategy," the Kremlin captured measurable goals that it could accomplish within a specific timeframe.[19] Dr. Katri Pynnöniemi, a professor at the University of Helsinki, conducted a comparative analysis of varying concepts between the Russian security strategies from the 1990s until 2015. Dr. Pynnöniemi states, "In 1997, Russia clearly did not have the political, economic, and military resources to realize its foreign policy ambitions. Whereas today [December 2015], Russia has both the resources and the political will to protect its national security with the means of military force."[20] The adaptation of a "security strategy" in 2009 brought about a whole

---

[16] Putin, "On the Historical Unity of Russians and Ukrainians."

[17] President of Russia, "On the National Security Strategy of the Russian Federation."

[18] Sophia Dimitrakopoulou and Andrew Liaropoulos, "Russia's National Security Strategy to 2020: A Great Power in the Making?" *Caucasian Review of International Affairs* 4, no. 1 (Winter 2010): 35-42, http://cria-online.org/russias-national-security-strategy-to-2020-a-great-power-in-the-making/.

[19] Dimitrakopoulou and Liaropoulos, "Russia's National Security Strategy to 2020."

[20] Katri Pynnöniemi, "Russia's National Security Strategy: Analysis of Conceptual Evolution," *The Journal of Slavic Military Studies* 31 no. 2 (2018): 240-256, https://doi.org/10.1080/13518046.2018.1451091.

of government approach using both hard and soft power, which included, in addition to national security, improving the quality of life of citizens, economic growth, science, new technology, education, healthcare, culture, and climate change. Updates to the NSS were commensurate with events at the time of publishing each one, i.e., Georgia, Crimea, Donbas, and NATO expansion.

In addition to world events, the decade between 2008 to 2018 marked a change in Russian strategic capabilities and self-perception. When reporters at the 2008 NATO summit asked President Putin about Ukraine's aspirations to join NATO, he responded that if Ukraine was "...admitted to NATO, [Ukraine] will simply cease to exist." [21] The 2009 NSS correspondingly did not reflect President Putin's sentiments, and at the time, the Kremlin lacked the political will and military means to put President Putin's words into action. Between the 2009 and 2015 strategies, Russia's annexation of Crimea and the ensuing conflict in the Donbas region caused a significant change in the geopolitical landscape. It simultaneously signaled to the world the political and military will of the Russian Federation.

By 2018, Russia further demonstrated its political and military capabilities by deploying military forces beyond its historical sphere of influence. Tatiana Stanovaya, a nonresident scholar at the Carnegie Moscow Center, wrote about the change in Russia's self-image that began in 2018: "Intoxicated by Russia's military success in Syria, its unique role in Central Asia, increased presence in Africa, and, above all, its newly developed 'wonder weapons,' Putin switched from feeling like an oppressed player to someone who could go on the offensive." [22] The 2009 and 2015 security strategies specified the time horizon of 2020 to work towards accomplishing the objectives the presidential decrees envisaged. The goal of those security objectives was defined as being "...an institutionally and economically strong centralized state with the statuses of a sovereign, and great, power." [23] Having met the timeline from the 2009 and 2015 strategies and a perceived accomplishment of establishing a "strong centralized state," the Kremlin shifted the focus of the 2021 NSS. The end state of the 2021 NSS is to restore Russia's "competitiveness and international prestige." [24] Russia's political will and capacity to protect its national security through military means have grown and permeated much of the 2021 NSS. The key to the Kremlin's approach to restoring its prestige lies in its ability to maintain its influence over its population and former Soviet states that have yet to join the European Union or NATO.

---

[21] Olga Allenova, Elena Geda, and Vladimir Novikov, "Блок НАТО Разошелся на Блок-пакеты [NATO bloc has broken up into block packages]," *Kommersant*, April 7, 2008, https://www.kommersant.ru/doc/877224.

[22] Tatiana Stanovaya, "3 Things the World should Know about Putin: The Nature of Putin's Russia Has Changed Drastically in the Last Few Years," *Foreign Policy*, January 27, 2022, https://foreignpolicy.com/2022/01/27/putin-russia-ukraine-crisis-invasion.

[23] Kanet, ed., *Routledge Handbook of Russian Security*.

[24] President of Russia, "On the National Security Strategy of the Russian Federation."

The changing tone of the NSS over time conveys the secondary and tertiary aims of strategic messaging to both domestic and international audiences of the Kremlin's attempt to redefine the world order.[25] The 2009 NSS promoted "…co-operation with the United States in terms of an equal strategic partnership in fields of common interests." [26] In 2015, the Russian NSS openly referenced the United States, the European Union, and NATO multiple times as competitors. The 2021 NSS mentions the United States twice, NATO once, and does not mention the EU. In the place of the United States, EU, and NATO, the 2021 NSS uses the catch-all term "Western," along with "unfriendly countries" and "unfriendly actions from foreign states." [27] Additionally, instead of a more cooperative tone when discussing the United States and its Allies, the 2021 NSS uses more adversarial language when referring to the West. Julian Cooper from the Center for Russian, Eurasian and European Studies stated, "The terminology is now more strident and […] the USA and its allies are explicitly identified as the source of attacks on Russian values, together with transnational corporations, NGOs, religious, terrorist and extremist organizations." [28] The change is most likely due to the Kremlin's view of itself and its self-perceived standing in the world. By omitting individual, adversarial countries and grouping the US, EU, and NATO as ambiguous "unfriendly countries," the vocabulary reinforces Russia's portrayal of being encircled by one common threat that the Kremlin must rival to gain global prestige.

The difference in connotation between the 2015 and 2021 strategies about the West is one demonstrative indicator of the change in Russia's thinking and the timing of its current actions in Ukraine. Article II of the NSS, "Russia in the Modern World: Trends and Opportunities," advances the idea that now is the Kremlin's window of opportunity to change the "structure of the world order." [29] For the past 30 years, Russia has viewed itself as acting from a position of weakness. Given the events leading up to the invasion of Ukraine, particularly with the US withdrawal from Afghanistan and the internal strife within the West (US domestic issues, BREXIT, new German leadership), Russia saw itself acting from a position of at least parity with the US.[30] Unlike the previous security strategies, the 2021 NSS asserts that "countries," an inference to the West, and in particular the United States, are losing their undisputed leadership and are trying to dictate their "…rules to other members of the international community..." through the use of "unfair competition," unilateral restrictive measures such as sanctions,

---

[25] Pynnöniemi, "Russia's National Security Strategy."

[26] Dimitrakopoulou and Liaropoulos, "Russia's National Security Strategy to 2020."

[27] President of Russia, "On the National Security Strategy of the Russian Federation."

[28] Julian Cooper, "Russia's Updated National Security Strategy," Russian Studies Series 2/21, NATO Defense College, last updated July 19, 2021, accessed October 14, 2021, https://www.ndc.nato.int/research/research.php?icode=704#.

[29] President of Russia, "On the National Security Strategy of the Russian Federation."

[30] "Round-up: Russian Press Focuses on Moscow's New Signal to West," *BBC Monitoring*, December 21, 2021.

"and openly interfere in the internal affairs of sovereign states."[31] The NSS further reinforces Russia's claim of its standing in the world. It emphasizes that Russia retains the capacity to protect its national security, whether internationally or domestically, first diplomatically and then, if necessary, through "symmetrical and asymmetric measures."[32] Russia's perceived status as a global competitor is as much a declaration to the world as to the Russian people. Ukraine thereby becomes the platform where Russia can openly challenge the West, its Alliance, and the West's resolve in maintaining the current rules-based order.

Three sections within the 2021 NSS highlight the role of Ukraine in the Kremlin's strategy to increase its global competitiveness. The sections that outline the pivotal role Ukraine plays in achieving Russia's end state include, in summary, how Russia sees itself in the modern world and Russia's national interests and priorities. Russia's interests and priorities feed into how Russia intends to ensure its national security. The specific subsections of the NSS include: "Information Security," "Protection of Traditional Russian Spiritual and Moral Values, Culture, and History," and "Strategic Stability and Mutually Beneficial International Cooperation."[33] Inherent in the bodies of all three sections is the idea described in the 2016 Russian military doctrine as the "'actions of individual persons' as one of the internal dangers to Russia's sovereignty, state, and territorial integrity."[34] Regardless of the end state of the NSS, the Russian people are the guarantors of its success.

In the subtext of the NSS lies the greatest obstacle to Russia's challenge to the world order: internal strife. President Putin's fear of Russia having its own Maidan-type event is a common theme throughout the 2021 NSS. It follows a similar vein found in the 2015 NSS of preserving the Putin regime from a popular uprising. Analyzing the 2015 NSS, Russian scholars Vladimir Gel'man and Pavel Shchelin argued that the 2015 NSS focused on a foreign policy based solely on regime survival. "Whereas the 2009 strategy stressed global competitive conditions, the new version [2015 NSS] is myopic and acutely fearful of color revolutions in continuation of Putin's statements about the Maidan Revolution."[35] Like the 2015 NSS, the 2021 NSS only states "color revolution" once; however, the sentiment of domestic unrest is a prevailing theme throughout the sections of the 2021 NSS. Specifically, the 2021 NSS states: "Unfriendly countries are trying to use the existing socioeconomic problems in the Russian Federation to destroy its internal unity, inspire and radicalize the protest movement, support marginal groups and split Russian society."[36] The restructuring and additions to the national priorities foment the reiterative fear of a domestic uprising: "Almost every

---

[31] President of Russia, "On the National Security Strategy of the Russian Federation."

[32] President of Russia, "On the National Security Strategy of the Russian Federation."

[33] President of Russia, "On the National Security Strategy of the Russian Federation."

[34] Pynnöniemi, "Russia's National Security Strategy."

[35] Kanet, ed., *Routledge Handbook of Russian Security*.

[36] President of Russia, "On the National Security Strategy of the Russian Federation."

priority area in the 2021 [NSS] contains criticism of Western actions that purportedly undermine Russian national interests." [37] The 2021 NSS outlined one way to combat Western influence in Russia and mitigate potential domestic uprisings by adding "Information Security" as a national priority.

Russian Information Security: Protect the Regime

At first glance, information security, as outlined in the 2021 NSS as a national priority, is not geared toward information warfare, nor does it seem to cover any offensive information operations that the West routinely accuses Russia of conducting. The general connotation of the information security priority carries the continued theme of Russia being besieged on all sides. The 2021 NSS states that foreign countries are using information to "…destabilize the socio-political situation in the Russian Federation," with the target being Russia's youth.[38] The new national priority on information security provides a well-defined method for controlling the narrative of information outside the Kremlin to the greater Russian population. As described in the NSS, the Kremlin labels any news or media contradicting Putin as disinformation.

To discourage the spread of potentially damaging information, the Russian government produces its own false narratives along five main themes: Russia is the victim, historical revisionism, the "collapse of Western Civilization," popular movements are US-sponsored "color revolutions," and finally, the reality is whatever the Kremlin wants it to be.[39] The juxtaposition of information and disinformation between the United States and Russia plays a significant role in gaining popular support amongst constituents and justifying further diplomatic or military actions. The internal politics in Ukraine, Russia's "special military operation" in Ukraine, and Russia's official statements and documents all fall within Russia's modus operandi as defined in its military doctrine on information security.

It is crucial to understand how both the US and Russia view information security and how each country operates within the information domain. The US definition of the information instrument of national power "…is limited to the US government's efforts to disseminate information to, and collect information on foreign audiences." [40] On the other hand, Russian military doctrine on information operations falls into two categories: cyber operations, such as hacking, and influence operations. The former deals with the technical aspect and in-

---

[37] Nivedita Kapoor, "Russia's New National Security Strategy," *Observer Research Foundation*, July 7, 2021, accessed January 27, 2022, https://www.orfonline.org/expert-speak/russias-new-national-security-strategy/.

[38] President of Russia, "On the National Security Strategy of the Russian Federation."

[39] U.S. State Department, "Russia's Top Five Persistent Disinformation Narratives," Fact Sheet, *Office of the Spokesperson*, January 20, 2022, accessed January 28, 2022, https://www.state.gov/russias-top-five-persistent-disinformation-narratives/.

[40] D. Robert Worley, *Orchestrating the Instruments of Power: A Critical Examination of the U.S. National Security System* (Raleigh, NC: Lulu Press, 2012).

cludes "shutting down pipelines, stealing data, and surveilling personal devices." [41] The second component of Russian information security "…targets the cognitive processes of the adversary's leaders and population. It focuses on psychological manipulation." [42] Russian military strategists Chekinov and Bogdanov argued, "In the ongoing revolution in information technologies, information and psychological warfare will largely lay the groundwork for victory." The chief of staff of the Russian armed forces, Valery Gerasimov, further elaborated by saying he values nonmilitary to military measures 4 to 1. [43] The NSS states that information security is not only reserved for "adversary's leaders and population" but also Russia's own people. The nonmilitary and military success will largely depend on who controls the narrative.

President Putin's Revisionist History Lesson

President Putin's article is a powerful narrative for domestic and international consumption that captures elements of the NSS. Under "Protection of Traditional Russian Spiritual and Moral Values, Culture, and History" in the NSS, it states: "Information-psychological sabotage and the 'Westernization' of culture increasingly threaten the Russian Federation from losing its cultural sovereignty. Attempts to falsify Russian and world history, distort historical truth and destroy historical memory, inciting interethnic and interfaith conflicts, and weaken the state-forming people have become more frequent." [44] To correct the "false" and "distorted" historical truths, President Putin personally wrote his version of the history of Russia and Ukraine. President Putin succinctly put into words the thoughts and ideas he had shared in fragments throughout his years in power when he published his article "On the Historical Unity of Russians and Ukrainians." President Putin states, "to better understand the present, and look into the future; we need to turn to the past." [45] While scholars and academics have identified many historical inaccuracies in President Putin's account, these are the "facts" President Putin is using to "look into the future" of Ukraine as a partner with Russia and is the narrative under which the Kremlin is operating.

President Putin opens his essay with the claim "…that Russians and Ukrainians were one people – a single whole." [46] By presenting Ukrainians and Russians as "one people," the traditional Russian spiritual and moral values addressed in the NSS apply equally to all Russians, Belarusians, and Ukrainians because of their "fraternal ties." Citizenship then becomes trivial when compared to the

---

[41] David Shedd and Ivana Stradner, "The Curious Omission in Russia's New Security Strategy," *Defense One*, August 25, 2021, https://www.defenseone.com/ideas/2021/08/curious-omission-russias-new-security-strategy/184854/.

[42] Shedd and Stradner, "The Curious Omission in Russia's New Security Strategy."

[43] Shedd and Stradner, "The Curious Omission in Russia's New Security Strategy."

[44] President of Russia, "On the National Security Strategy of the Russian Federation."

[45] Putin, "On the Historical Unity of Russians and Ukrainians."

[46] Putin, "On the Historical Unity of Russians and Ukrainians."

Russian identity. This Russian identity and "cultural sovereignty" are defined in the NSS by culture, spiritual and moral values, language, and a shared history.[47] The NSS goes on to define those inherent Russian values as "life, dignity, human rights and freedoms, patriotism, citizenship, service to the Fatherland and responsibility for its destiny, high moral ideals, a strong family, creative work, the priority of the spiritual over the material, humanism, mercy, justice, collectivism, mutual assistance and mutual respect, historical memory and continuity of generations, the unity of the peoples of Russia."[48] President Putin stresses that Ukrainians are undergoing a "forced change of identity," and the West is coercing them to "deny their roots."[49] He continues, "It would not be an exaggeration to say that the path of forced assimilation, the formation of an ethnically pure Ukrainian state, aggressive towards Russia, is comparable in its consequences to the use of weapons of mass destruction against us."[50] President Putin's article, like the NSS he signed in July 2021, asserts that the West and other "unfriendly countries" are culpable for meddling in Ukrainian affairs and for being complicit in the alienation of ethnic Russians.

President Putin's view on history provides additional insights into the origins of the "Ukrainization" of Ukraine. President Putin defines Ukrainization as the rise of the "Ukrainian culture, language, and identity" separate from the larger Russian nation.[51] He places the blame primarily on the Bolsheviks and their social experiments. Yet, President Putin also states that Ukrainization began much earlier than the Bolsheviks when Polish elites and Austro-Hungarians perpetuated "…the idea of Ukrainian people as a nation separate from Russians…."[52] Advancing the hypothesis that external forces concocted the notion of Ukrainian people and culture provides President Putin with additional credence to the idea that the West is interfering in Ukrainian internal affairs. President Putin refuses to accept the notion that the Ukrainian people, through their own volition, have aspirational goals of establishing a liberal democratic government similar to other former Soviet states that are now part of the EU. Such an idea validates the color revolutions and goes contrary to the concept of Ukrainization. It also nullifies any justification the Kremlin could use to intercede on behalf of devout Russians who are being "…threatened with ethnic cleansing and the use of military force."[53]

In addition to the Western liberal model, President Putin blames the current Ukrainian leadership for purportedly forcing ethnic Russians to assimilate into a new Ukrainian state. A phrase used in another context but applying equally to

---

[47] President of Russia, "On the National Security Strategy of the Russian Federation."

[48] President of Russia, "On the National Security Strategy of the Russian Federation."

[49] Putin, "On the Historical Unity of Russians and Ukrainians."

[50] Putin, "On the Historical Unity of Russians and Ukrainians."

[51] Putin, "On the Historical Unity of Russians and Ukrainians."

[52] Putin, "On the Historical Unity of Russians and Ukrainians."

[53] Putin, "On the Historical Unity of Russians and Ukrainians."

how the Kremlin views the leaders in Ukraine is that they are simply the "minority masquerading as the majority."[54] At the 2021 Valdai Conference, President Putin stated "…that silent majority voted for them [current Ukrainian leadership] in the hope that they would fulfill their campaign promises, but the loud and aggressive nationalist minority suppressed all freedom in decision-making that the Ukrainian people expected."[55] Taking a zero-sum approach to policies Ukraine enacts that potentially go against ethnic Russians provides the Kremlin with a rationalization to execute its foreign policy goals. The NSS states that to achieve the foreign policy goals of the Russian Federation, the Kremlin can provide "… support to compatriots living abroad in exercising their rights, including the right to preserve the all-Russian cultural identity, and ensuring the protection of their interest."[56] President Putin's ethno-nationalist approach to Ukraine is a foundational pretext to justify the Kremlin's actions against Ukraine.

The overall premise of President Putin's article is that the descendants of ancient Rus: Russia, Belarus, and Ukraine, or commonly phrased in his article, Velikorussia (Big Russia – geographically what is now Russia), Belarus, Malorussia (Little Russia – Current geographic state of Ukraine), and Novorossiya (New Russia – the land in South/Southeastern Ukraine that borders the Black Sea, Azov Sea, and Russia), were "ethnically and religiously diverse" but symbiotically worked together to form the entire Russian nation.[57] President Putin lays the blame primarily on the Bolsheviks for fracturing this inherent Russian identity and cooperative relationship. He states that "…modern Ukraine is entirely the product of the Soviet era," and the Bolsheviks were "…generous in drawing borders and bestowing territorial gifts." President Putin surmises that "Russia was robbed" because of the Bolsheviks.[58]

In 1991, the three founding states (the Russian Federation, Belarus, and Ukraine) of the Soviet Union signed the Belavezha Accord, or Agreement on Establishing the Commonwealth of Independent States, which included an article to "…recognize and respect each other's territorial integrity [as existing in 1991] and the inviolability of existing borders within the Commonwealth."[59] However, President Putin argues that the Belavezha Accord does not have legal merit because the Bolsheviks detached historical territories from Russia. The only legal

---

[54] Elder L. Tom Perry, "Why Marriage and Family Matter – Everywhere in the World," *The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints*, April 2015, accessed December 8, 2021, https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/general-conference/2015/04/why-marriage-and-family-matter-everywhere-in-the-world.

[55] "Valdai Discussion Club Meeting October 2021."

[56] President of Russia, "On the National Security Strategy of the Russian Federation."

[57] Putin, "On the Historical Unity of Russians and Ukrainians."

[58] Putin, "On the Historical Unity of Russians and Ukrainians."

[59] Russian Federation, Ukraine and Belarus, "Соглашение о Создании Содружества Независимых Государств [Agreement on Establishing the Commonwealth of Independent States]," *Internet Portal CIS Integration Space*, December 8, 1991, accessed February 10, 2022, https://e-cis.info/page/3373/79405/.

recourse would be for the founding states of the USSR to "…return to the boundaries they had before joining the Soviet Union" in 1922.[60] In other words, Nikita Khrushchev's ceding of Crimea to Ukraine in 1954 was "…in gross violation of legal norms," and Russia was therefore justified in annexing the peninsula in 2014.[61] A significant omission from President Putin's argument is the Alma-Ata Declaration. Less than two weeks after the three largest former Soviet states signed the Belavezha Accord, eleven former Soviet states, including Russia, Ukraine, and Belarus, signed the Alma-Ata Declaration. This declaration reiterated the same articles of the Belavezha Accords. It declares "…mutual recognition and respect for state sovereignty and sovereign equality; the inalienable right to self-determination; the principles of equality and non-interference in internal affairs; the rejection of the use of force and the threat of force, economic and any other methods of pressure; peaceful settlement of disputes, respect for human rights and freedoms, including the rights of national minorities; conscientious fulfillment of obligations and other generally recognized principles and norms of international law; recognizing and respecting each other's territorial integrity and the inviolability of existing borders." [62] Putin's legal argument to compromise the validity of past treaties to justify actions in Ukraine could theoretically apply equally to any past treaty with all former Soviet states.

President Putin's reneging on agreements made at the collapse of the Soviet Union based on legal grounds is only a part of the Kremlin's reasoning. An alternate justification for revisiting past agreements aligns with President Putin's notion of renegotiating the post-Soviet settlement from a position Russia did not have in the early 1990s. The Kremlin views the renegotiating of past treaties as one within its rights as a self-perceived world power. President Putin, speaking about the December 2021 draft treaty with the United States and the draft agreement with NATO at a recent Defense Ministry Board, stated "that even written Western commitments don't guarantee anything since the West easily withdraws from treaties." [63] The specific commitment President Putin is referring to is the expansion of NATO. In 1990, during the German unification proceeding, US Secretary of State, James Baker, assured Mikhail Gorbachev that NATO would not expand "not one inch eastward." [64] While neither the US nor the Soviet Union signed a formal treaty about NATO expansion, the Kremlin has viewed each enlargement of NATO as a violation of Baker's verbal agreement with Gorbachev. Therefore, President Putin presumes that if Washington and Brussels can interpret agreements to fit their needs, Moscow, now acting as an equal, can

---

[60] Putin, "On the Historical Unity of Russians and Ukrainians."

[61] Putin, "On the Historical Unity of Russians and Ukrainians."

[62] Commonwealth of Independent States, "Alma-Ata Declaration," December 21, 1991, Alma Ata, accessed February 5, 2022, https://cis.minsk.by/page/178/alma-atinskaa-deklaracia-g-alma-ata-21-dekabra-1991-goda.

[63] Stanovaya, "3 Things the World should Know about Putin."

[64] Jan Eichler, *NATO's Expansion After the Cold War: Geopolitics and Impacts for International Security* (Cham, Switzerland: Springer, 2021).

also reinterpret agreements made at the end of the Soviet Union. However, reevaluating written treaties threatens the integrity of all treaties to which the Russian Federation is a signatory. Such an approach can spiral out of control, and questions arise about how far back and which agreements are on the line. In his book, *Aggression against Ukraine,* Thomas Grant concludes his argument on territory, responsibility, and international law by saying: "The problem with territorial revision when it is done with reference to history is that more than one State has a history." [65] President Putin's revisionist history paper eludes to several eras in Russian history that President Putin wishes to restore. The open-ended nature of his narrative leaves all treaties from the mid-1800s to the present on the table, with the eventual goal of retaining the Russian cultural identity in "historical Russian lands."

President Putin's Operation Code

Ultimately, how far the Kremlin will go to protect the "cultural sovereignty" of ethnic Russians remains with President Putin. The article he penned provides a narrative for Russians, Ukrainians, and the global community. Receiving buy-in from those groups, particularly his constituents and the pro-Russian peoples of Ukraine, is a variable President Putin must consider in his decision-making. Dr. Graeme Herd, a professor at the George C. Marshall Center, wrote the following about President Putin's operational code. "Putin makes decisions either when the benefits outweigh the costs or when the costs become acceptable [....] Putin's risk calculus, his perception of costs/benefits, is critical to understanding when and why strategic decisions are made." [66] Following the invasion of Ukraine, an unanswered question remains of whether the narrative President Putin broadcasted to the Russian people and the world is sufficient to justify his formal recognition of DPR and LPR and the invasion of a sovereign country.

The critical problem with President Putin's operational code in deciding to invade Ukraine is that it is based on "his perception." Similar to his skewed perception of history, a flawed understanding of costs and benefits will result in decisions based on a false premise. Recent decisions to invade Ukraine resulted from President Putin surrounding himself with "trusted" advisors that confirm his biases and create the "perception" that the costs of acting now will significantly outweigh the future costs of waiting. Like Grigori Potemkin's villages displayed to Catherine the Great, Putin's advisors have generated Potemkin assessments of realities in Ukraine.

In his declaration to invade Ukraine on February 24, 2022, President Putin stated that his primary goal "is to protect people who have been subjected to abuse, genocide by the Kyiv regime for eight years, and for this, we will strive to

---

[65] Thomas D. Grant, *Aggression Against Ukraine: Territory, Responsibility, and International Law* (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015).

[66] Kanet, ed., *Routledge Handbook of Russian Security*.

demilitarize and denazify Ukraine." [67] The notion of "denazify" echoes what Putin referred to as "Ukrainization" of Ukraine in his essay. President Putin's fear of Ukrainization and his actions are also reminiscent of Stalin's two-prong approach against Ukraine's institutions and national identity in the lead-up to the Holodomor in 1932. No evidence suggests Ukraine has abused or committed genocide of ethnic Russians in Ukraine or the breakaway regions of Donbas. Martin Shaw, a sociologist and academic, defined genocide as "a form of violent social conflict or war between armed power organizations that aim to destroy civilian social groups, and those groups and other actors who resist this destruction." [68] The last report before Russia's invasion from the United Nations Commission on Human Rights asserted that since 2014 there has been a decrease in the number of civilian deaths in the Donbas region and that all deaths have been conflict-related.[69] In other words, the civilians killed have been collateral deaths due to armed engagements between the warring factions. Ukrainian armed forces have not deliberately targeted a specific "civilian social group" with the aim of destroying them. President Putin's use of the word genocide is likely derived from his perceived notion that ethnic Russians in Ukraine are undergoing a "forced change of identity" through some of Kyiv's political and social reforms and realignment toward the West.[70]

There is a mismatch in Putin's perception and reality, resulting in further polarization of Ukrainian people, regardless of their language or religion, away from Russia. The second stated objective of current operations to demilitarize Ukraine would bring to fruition President Putin's claim that Ukraine is not a legitimate state.[71] The legitimacy of a state is based on four components – population, territory, government, and sovereignty. The state's ability to exercise power and control over a defined geographical area is critical to both territory and sovereignty.[72] Russia's demilitarization of Ukraine would remove two of the four components of a legitimate state, thereby giving the Kremlin the de facto power of maintaining Ukraine's territory and sovereignty. However, delegitimizing

---

[67] Vladimir Putin, "Обращение Президента Российской Федерации [Address by the President of the Russian Federation]," February 24, accessed April 30, 2022, http://www.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/67843.

[68] Amos Fox, "Russo-Ukrainian Patterns of Genocide in the Twentieth Century," *Journal of Strategic Security* 14, no. 4 (2021): 56-71, https://doi.org/10.5038/1944-0472.14.4.1913.

[69] United Nations Human Rights, "Conflict-Related Civilian Casualties in Ukraine," Office of the High Commissioner, October 8, 2021, accessed April 8, 2022, https://ukraine.un.org/sites/default/files/2021-10/Conflict-related%20civilian%20casualties%20as%20of%2030%20September%202021%20%28rev%208%20Oct%202021%29%20EN.pdf.

[70] Putin, "On the Historical Unity of Russians and Ukrainians."

[71] Putin, "Address by the President of the Russian Federation."

[72] Sumedha Korishetti, "Challenges to State Control of Territory: Comparative Analysis of Yemen, Afghanistan and Myanmar," *Asian Journal of Comparative Politics* 7, no. 1 (2022): 115-131. https://doi.org/10.1177/20578911211004775.

Ukraine as a sovereign state without popular support runs significant risks of insurgencies and popular uprisings.

Immediately following Russia's invasion of Ukraine, President Putin outlined what he hoped to achieve by invading Ukraine.[73] An important takeaway from Putin's remarks is that Ukraine is only briefly mentioned once near the end of his comments; instead, the focus was on the West as President Putin laid the blame squarely on the United States. He stated that NATO is merely "a tool of US foreign policy" and that "…the whole so-called Western bloc formed by the United States in its own image and likeness is, in its entirety, the very same 'empire of lies'." [74] President Putin expounded upon his accusations against the United States by citing Western expeditionary operations in Serbia, Iraq, Libya, and Syria as examples of "gross disregard for international law." [75] President Putin's language propagates the accusatorial tone from the NSS that the US and the West's rules-based system has failed. Putin offers Russia as the alternative "great power" for other countries to emulate.

Conclusion

The Kremlin's actions against Ukraine, beginning in 2014 through the current "special military operation," was a gamble to challenge the Euro-Atlantic rules-based order. The NSS of the Russian Federation outlines the goals and objectives of how Russia can attain global recognition and become "…one of the influential centers of the modern world." [76] The most explicit demonstration of the Kremlin operationalizing portions of the NSS, reinforced by the narrative of Putin's history article, is the pretext President Putin used to order the attack on Ukraine – to safeguard Russia's "cultural sovereignty" abroad. The protection of ethnic Russians in Ukraine may have justified in Putin's mind a reason to invade, but pacifying Ukraine is only an intermediate objective. Russia's intended end state is to redefine the world order and gain a more significant role in countering Western liberal democracy.

Russia's invasion of Ukraine changed and will continue to change the Euro-Atlantic security environment. Millions of displaced persons and refugees are fleeing west from Ukraine. The West is pouring millions of dollars of military equipment and aid to the Ukrainian armed forces. A global food crisis is looming based on impending shortages of exports from both Ukraine and Russia. Foreign fighters, fighting on both the Ukrainian and Russian sides, arrive daily. Russia's efforts have unquestionably changed the security situation in Europe. However, the change has gone contrary to President Putin's desired outcome. The Russian

---

[73] Putin, "Обращение Президента Российской Федерации [Address by the President of the Russian Federation]."

[74] Putin, "Address by the President of the Russian Federation."

[75] Putin, "Обращение Президента Российской Федерации [Address by the President of the Russian Federation]."

[76] President of Russia, "On the National Security Strategy of the Russian Federation."

armed forces failed to accomplish their intended objectives in Ukraine. The Russian military failures have resulted in the Kremlin resorting to energy blackmail, threatening the use of nuclear weapons, and a surge of disinformation. Russia's global prestige is debatable.

Ukraine upset President Putin's plans to achieve its national security priorities. Ukraine's determination to retain its sovereignty and territorial integrity play toward President Putin's greatest fear of a Russian color revolution. On March 16, 2022, in an attempt to shore up domestic support for the mounting pressure from failures in Ukraine, President Putin addressed leaders of the Russian Federation on a new socioeconomic plan. The undertones of the speech suggested that President Putin personally lives by the adage that "Putin is Russia, and Russia is Putin." He stated: "The collective West is trying to divide our society using, to its own advantage, combat losses and the socioeconomic consequences of the sanctions, and to provoke civil unrest in Russia."[77] President Putin highlighting the "socioeconomic consequences" is a reference from the NSS. He repeats the refrain about the collective West undermining his leadership through economic pressures throughout his speech. His plea to his constituents is that he has a plan to see Russia through these challenging times. The goal being appeasement of the population to prevent a potential division between himself and the Russian people.

President Putin also attempted to flip the narrative of the current economic hardships as part of his objective to accomplish his national security strategy goals. He stated, "…the ongoing developments are drawing a line under the global dominance of Western countries…[, and] they [ongoing developments] call into question the economic model that has been imposed on developing countries and the entire world…."[78] President Putin's narrative and stated objectives will evolve as his situation becomes more dire. However, the crux of President Putin's ability to remain in power is Ukraine. President Putin's actions in Ukraine solidified the Euro-Atlantic security apparatus and galvanized Ukraine's resolve to remain a free country. In the end, the Russian people will need to decide if Russia is Putin or Russia is something greater.

On the other hand, the North Atlantic Alliance strengthened its position in the current world order. The West has a shared common threat and is determined to oppose that threat through unprecedented sanctions, increased national defense spending, and military deterrence options. Ukraine has become the literal battleground on which the Kremlin is waging its struggle against Western civilization.[79] Through blood and grit, the Ukrainian people are ensuring the creditability of the Euro-Atlantic rules-based order.

---

77 President of Russia, "Meeting on Socioeconomic Support for Regions," March 16, 2022, accessed April 29, 2022, http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/67996.

78 President of Russia, "Meeting on Socioeconomic Support for Regions."

79 Shevtsova, "Russia's Ukraine Obsession," 138-147.

Disclaimer

About the Author

Erik Fagergren is an Intelligence Planner at U.S. European Command Headquarters. He was a Headquarters Department of the Army G-3/5/7 Fellow at the George C. Marshall European Center for Security Studies from 2021-2022. He is a career Military Intelligence Officer and has worked at the Tactical, Operational, and Strategic level. He has a Bachelor of Science in Russian and Eastern European Studies from the United States Military Academy, and a Master of Arts in Defense and Strategic Studies from the Naval War College.
E-mail: elfagergren@gmail.com

Research Article

Excessive Brotherly Love? – 'Fraternity' of Russians and Ukrainians as a Russian Propaganda Narrative

Maryna Starodubska

Managing Partner, TLFRD, https://www.tlfrd.com
MBA Adjunct Professor, Kyiv-Mohyla Business School, https://www.kmbs.ua

Abstract: This article aims to show, using evidence from cross-cultural studies, that the peoples of Ukraine and Russia differ significantly on the individualism-collectivism dimension that lies at the heart of national identity. It argues that the idea of Russian and Ukrainian fraternity is, in fact, a myth, based perhaps on some limited cultural accidentals or overly-broad categorizations of temperament and not on fundamental ideologies that undergird the society. Illusions of the fraternity are a product of propaganda based on a range of narratives about the countries (including Ukraine) Russia considers its "area of influence" and has been unsuccessfully trying to return under its control. Understanding the motivations of Russia, a state with a legacy of authoritarianism and consistently strong ideological opposition to democratic values, is key to making sense of such narratives and the logic behind them. Cross-cultural studies provide insights for a broader understanding of inherent differences between Russian and Ukrainian peoples. Approximately 50 percent of the variation in national cultural orientations is unique to the country and is rooted in the lasting differences in historic developmental trajectories. Of particular interest is the relationship between individualism and collectivism in Russian and Ukrainian cultures and its respective impact on the institutions, as these dimensions are among the most distinctive for cultural variation. The author argues that one can discern clear distinctions in cultures by observing the distinct evolution and varying importance of institutions.

Keywords: fraternal people, Ukraine, Russia, cross-cultural comparison, values, institutions.

Introduction

Perhaps, no Russia-created myth about Ukraine remains as deeply ingrained in our memory and sense-making as "Ukrainians and Russians are fraternal peoples."[1] Several generations of Ukrainians have grown up being sure they have historical similarities and a connection with Russians that has never really been there. In reality, the statements about "fraternal peoples" are a product of propaganda based on a range of narratives about the countries Russia considers its "area of influence" and has been unsuccessfully trying to bring back under its control. It is particularly eager to make Ukraine "its own again."[2] Understanding the motivations of Russia, a state with a legacy of authoritarianism[3] and consistently strong ideological opposition to democratic values,[4] is key to making sense of such narratives and the logic behind them. Cross-cultural studies provide evidence and insights allowing a broader understanding of inherent differences between Russian and Ukrainian peoples. Roughly 50 percent of the variation in national cultural orientations is unique. It is rooted in the lasting differences in historic developmental trajectories – despite the effects of globalization and international economic cooperation.[5] Of particular interest in understanding these differences is the relationship between individualism and collectivism in Russian and Ukrainian cultures and its respective impact on the institutions. These dimensions are found to be among the most distinctive for cultural variation, i.e., responsible for many differences between national cultures.[6] The purpose of this article is to show, using evidence from cross-cultural studies, that the peoples of Ukraine and Russia differ significantly on the individualism-collectivism dimension and could not be less "fraternal." Considering the relative scarcity of peer-reviewed research on Ukrainian national culture, the conclusions are based on

1 Irina Khaldarova, "Brother or 'Other'? Transformation of Strategic Narratives in Russian Television News during the Ukrainian Crisis," *Media, War & Conflict* 14, no. 1 (2021): 3-20, https://doi.org/10.1177/1750635219846016.

2 Dmitry Gorenburg, "Russian Foreign Policy Narratives," *Security Insights*, no. 042 (George C. Marshall European Center for Security Studies, November 2019), https://www.marshallcenter.org/en/publications/security-insights/russian-foreign-policy-narratives-0.

3 "Freedom in the World 2021: Russia," Freedom House Country Report, 2021, https://freedomhouse.org/country/russia/freedom-world/2021.

4 Eugene Rumer and Richard Sokolsky, "Grand Illusions: The Impact of Misperceptions About Russia on U.S. Policy," Paper (Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, June 30, 2021): 23-25, https://carnegieendowment.org/2021/06/30/grand-illusions-impact-of-misperceptionsabout-russia-on-u.s.-policy-pub-84845.

5 Sjoerd Beugelsdijk and Chris Welzel, "Dimensions and Dynamics of National Culture: Synthesizing Hofstede With Inglehart," *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology* 49, no. 10 (November 2018): 1469-1505, 1469, https://doi.org/10.1177/0022022118798505.

6 Anu Realo, Jüri Allik, and Maaja Vadi, "The Hierarchical Structure of Collectivism," *Journal of Research in Personality* 31, no. 1 (March 1997): 93-116, https://doi.org/10.1006/jrpe.1997.2170.

the combination of sources from academic papers, international analytical organizations, and independent media.

As the Levee Steers the River: How National Culture Shapes and 'Cements' a Country's Institutions

National culture takes shape over the course of centuries, influenced by the country's landscape, climate, location, wars and ruling regimes, societal interaction and stratification, and is rather path-dependent or, in simple terms, resistant to change.[7] National culture repeatedly manifests on individual and societal levels in specific ways. It primarily shapes institutions – the mechanisms of making social choices, distributing political influence, and enduring regularity of behavior. Institutions can be formal (rules, laws, and their enforcement mechanisms) and informal (self-regulation, codes of ethics and conduct, conventions, deeply embedded social norms).[8] However, once the institutions have developed and taken root, they begin to further "steer" national culture—as the levee steers and contains the river—thus, preventing rapid and abrupt cultural shifts.[9] Institutions structure social interaction of people by endorsing shared and legitimate understandings of reality [10] (what is happening and what to make of it). Hence, no significant changes in the national culture can happen unless profound institutional changes occur.

Let's take the phenomenon of corruption as an example. Personal networks and clan structures were established in Tsarist Russia and re-emerged among the new ruling classes in Soviet times and then among the political elite in the 1990s. They served to guard the individual interests of their participants. Combined with the deeply embedded attitude of "legal nihilism," [11] they undermine the functioning of formal bureaucracy and serve as a breeding ground for corruption

---

[7] Beugelsdijk and Welzel, "Dimensions and Dynamics of National Culture," 1497-1498.

[8] Daron Acemoglu, Simon Johnson, and James A. Robinson, "Institutions as a Fundamental Cause of Long-Run Growth," in *Handbook of Economic Growth*, vol. 1A, edited by Philippe Aghion and Steven N. Durlauf (Amsterdam and Boston: Elsevier, North-Holland, 2006), 385-472, https://economics.mit.edu/sites/default/files/publications/institutions-as-the-fundamental-cause-of-long-run-.pdf.

[9] Alberto Alesina and Paola Giuliano, "Culture and Institutions," *Journal of Economic Literature* 53, no. 4 (December 2015): 898-944, 901-904, http://dx.doi.org/10.1257/jel.53.4.898.

[10] Alexander Fürstenberg, Sebastian Starystach, and Andrzej Uhl, "Culture and Corruption: An Experimental Comparison of Cultural Patterns on the Corruption Propensity in Poland and Russia," *European Journal of Criminology* (2022), 5-6, https://doi.org/10.1177/14773708221081017.

[11] Manabu Suhara, "Corruption in Russia: A Historical Perspective," in *Democracy and Market Economics in Central and Eastern Europe: Are New Institutions Being Consolidated?* ed. Tadayuki Hayashi (Sapporo: Hokkaido University, 2004), 383-403.

to this day.[12] The general underlying principle behind Russia's corruption is: "Enrich those above you in the hierarchy and maintain your loyalty as you work to enrich yourself." [13] Corruption is a way to climb up the societal vertical, strengthening connections with the "right" people along the way and paying the "toll" to the higher-ups as a token of loyalty. In such a society, appealing to those in power becomes increasingly more important than "doing one's job." Until the pattern of these informal non-transparent relationships persists, it will hinder the development and the functioning of formal, transparent institutions.

In the case of Ukraine, corruption has different institutional causes. It is predominantly rooted in distrust in the government institutions' ability to perform their functions systemically. When Ukraine's territory was split between Austria-Hungary and Russia, the respective parts followed different development patterns: in the West, the Habsburgs were fostering the Ukrainian community as a counterweight against the Poles, while in the East, the Romanovs suppressed all local identities. Consequently, distinctly different views of Ukraine's geopolitical role and voting behavior persist today in the respective territories. One has been gravitating towards Russia, the other – towards Europe in terms of national identity, cultural orientation, the strength of community bonds, and civic engagement, transmitted largely through informal institutions, such as families and communities.[14] As key "circles of trust," family and local community are still the most powerful informal institutions in Ukraine, with the government institutions having the lowest trust ratings since 1991, when Ukraine gained independence, till today: before Russia's invasion in February 2022, 37.5 % of Ukrainians trusted state institutions, 19.8 % trusted the judiciary, 34.6 % trusted the police, and 30.1 % trusted other Ukrainians they met for the first time (except for the Armed Forces with 70.1 % level of trust).[15]

The 'Layered Cake' of National Culture: How Possible Is the Change and Why Does It Take So Long?

To make sense of how national culture can change, one must consider its three levels, which underpin each other and have different "modification" periods:

---

[12] Susanne Schattenberg, "Korruptes Rußland? Russische Verwaltungskultur im 19. Jahrhundert," *Themenportal Europäische Geschichte* (2007), www.europa.clio-online.de/Portals/_Europa/documents/B2007/E_Schattenberg_Beamte.pdf.

[13] Noah Buckley, "Corruption and Power in Russia," Russia Political Economy Project (Foreign Policy Research Institute, April 2018): 9-12, https://www.fpri.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/Buckley.pdf.

[14] Leonid V. Peisakhin, "Living Historical Legacies: The 'Why' and 'How' of Institutional Persistence – The Case of Ukraine," *SSRN*, September 1, 2010, 4-7, http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.1666548.

[15] *Ukraine in World Values Survey 2020: Resume of the Analytical Report* (Kyiv, Ukraine: NGO Ukrainian Centre for European Policy, 2020), 5-8 https://ucep.org.ua/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/WVS_UA_2020_report_ENG_WEB.pdf.

(1) underlying assumptions, (2) beliefs and values; (3) behavior norms and artifacts.

For the national culture to profoundly shift, change must happen on its deepest level – "*underlying assumptions,*" [16] the sense-making templates society reproduces "by default" from generation to generation, which takes centuries to change.[17] For instance, among the underlying assumptions of the Ukrainian national culture is freedom [volya/svoboda] – the ability to make important decisions without pressure or coercion,[18] characterized primarily by a flexible and non-obligatory view of rules and limitations [19] with equality, fairness, and responsibility being less important than freedom.[20] In contrast, among the underlying assumptions of the Russian national culture are the lack of autonomy among the population in decision-making and violence as a means of ensuring obedience and deference. Interaction patterns are "vertical," coercive, rather than "horizontal" and dialogue-based [21]: "forcing instead of convincing," "imposing instead of explaining," and "compromise equals weakness." [22]

The next level of national culture manifestation in societal interaction and individual sense-making contains "*beliefs and values,*" the moving principles that "signal" how one should interact with their environment in specific situations. It takes decades to change.[23] Numerous studies, particularly by Inglehart, Beugelsdijk, and Welzel, show that though beliefs and values do shift, this change is not radical but rather follows the path established by the underlying assumptions of a specific national culture.

---

[16] Kwasi Dartey-Baah, "The Impact of National Cultures on Corporate Cultures in Organisations," *Academic Leadership: The Online Journal* 9, no. 1 (Winter 2011) , Article 47, 5, https://scholars.fhsu.edu/alj/vol9/iss1/47/.

[17] Ronald Inglehart and Wayne E. Baker, "Modernization, Cultural Change, and the Persistence of Traditional Values," *American Sociological Review* 65, no. 1 (February 2000): 19-51, 40-50, https://doi.org/10.2307/2657288.

[18] S. Kolyshko, M. Parachchevyn, and V. Yavorsky, "What Ukrainians Think of Human Rights: Assessment of Change" (Kyiv, Ukraine: Center for Information on Human Rights and Democratic Initiatives Foundation, 2018), 15-18, https://dif.org.ua/uploads/pdf/19484532155c0fae449caba5.69437042.pdf.

[19] William David Brice and Wayne D. Jones, "The Cultural Foundations of Family Business Management: Evidence from Ukraine," *Eurasian Journal of Business and Economics* 1, no. 1 (2008): 3-23, 18, www.ejbe.org/EJBE2008Vol01No01p03BRICE-JONES.pdf.

[20] Kolyshko, Parachchevyn, and Yavorsky, "What Ukrainians Think of Human Rights," 15-18.

[21] Valery Chirkov et al., "Differentiating Autonomy from Individualism and Independence: A Self-Determination Theory Perspective on Internalization of Cultural Orientations and Well-Being," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 84, no. 1 (2003): 97-110, 100, 103, 104, https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.84.1.97.

[22] Richard D. Lewis, *When Cultures Collide: Leading Across Cultures* (Boston/London: Nicholas Brealey International, 2006), 372-379, http://www.utntyh.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/11/When-Cultures-Collide.pdf.

[23] Beugelsdijk and Welzel, "Dimensions and Dynamics of National Culture," 1485-1487.

The key differences in the beliefs and values of Ukrainians and Russians manifest through the attitudes towards the concepts of leadership, autonomy, and national identity, underpinned by Russia's legacy of authoritarianism[24] and Ukraine's lack of such legacy[25]:

- *Rulers/leaders*: In Russian culture, the ability to dominate through substantive and procedural rule-breaking, interfere with subordinates' preferences without the need to justify accountability to them[26] are the key signs of an authoritative figure, and subordinating one's interests to those of senior "in-group" members is not only normal but expected by default.[27]

   In Ukrainian culture, a leader will have authority if the subordinates believe he or she considers their interests when making decisions – a belief that's been part of the country's institutional tissue even during the Soviet times.[28] If a leader loses legitimacy, they can be overthrown, which happened regularly in Ukraine's history, including the three revolutions ("On Granite," 1990; "Orange," 2004; and "Euromaidan," 2014) during the last 30 years alone.

- *Population's decision-making autonomy*: According to GLOBE Project data, the key practical manifestation of Russia's national cultural values include the inability to obtain the desired result without aggression, low consideration for moral principles and ethics, problem- rather than performance orientation, and lack of humane orientation – overall and in leader-subordinate relations.[29] Simply put, the Russian masses' desired state can be described as "learned helplessness." The key life-related decisions are delegated to a narrow circle of high-level people in the respective community and then "cascaded" down for execution with no effort to discuss or persuade – all peculiar to authoritarian states.[30]

---

24   Ben Judah, "The Terrible Truth So Many Experts Missed about Russia," *Slate*, February 28, 2022, https://slate.com/news-and-politics/2022/02/ukraine-invasion-putin-is-ruling-alone.html.

25   Nataliya Kibita, "'Why Isn't Ukraine Authoritarian?' Asks Nataliya Kibita," Ukrainian Research Institute (HURI), Harvard University, July 11, 2019, https://huri.harvard.edu/news/why-isnt-ukraine-authoritarian-asks-nataliya-kibita.

26   Marlies Glasius, "What Authoritarianism Is ... and Is Not: A Practice Perspective," *International Affairs* 94, no. 3 (May 2018): 515-533, 525, https://doi.org/10.1093/ia/iiy060.

27   Maaja Vadi and Michael Vereshagin, "The Deposit of Collectivism in Organizational Culture in Russia: Some Consequences of Human Resources Management," *Baltic Journal of Management* 1, no. 2 (May 2006): 188-200, 190-192, https://doi.org/10.1108/17465260610663881.

28   Kibita, "'Why Isn't Ukraine Authoritarian?'."

29   "Culture and Leadership Study (2004)," Globe Project, https://globeproject.com/results/countries/.

30   In 2021, Freedom House assigned Russia a global freedom score of 20 out of 100, Reporters Without Borders' Press Freedom Index ranked Russia 155th of 180 countries,

In Ukrainian society, the ability to make decisions without pressure or coercion is the key criterion of the quality of life – largely due to the tradition of resolving political disagreements through negotiations (not consolidation of power) [31] and strong regional distribution of political power.[32] Ukrainian culture, though collectivist and hierarchical, is characterized by 56 % of citizens expecting the government to provide equal conditions and opportunities with the responsibility of using those resting with each individual, and the top 4 values considered most important (after freedom) being fairness, security, equality, and dignity.[33]

- *National identity*: After the USSR collapsed, Russia has lost any remnants of the national idea, which earlier revolved around maintaining the country's "grandeur" by subduing other countries. Russia has been trying to "make itself great again" since then by "saving the Russian-speaking people" in the adjacent countries it considers "younger brothers" who need to "return home." [34] The latest vivid example of the lacking national idea in Russia is the phenomenon of "pobedabesiye" – the meme denoting obsession with Russia's supposed victory in the "Great Patriotic War" and claiming that "one nation" won that war, thus, denying Ukraine's agency in this fundamental event. It manifests in Russia's propaganda narratives aimed at justifying its attempts to impose pro-Russian values and culture on Ukraine coercively and juxtapose Russia and its "younger underdeveloped 'brothers' [Ukraine, Belarus, Moldova] to the 'collective West.'" [35]

Ukraine has never shown signs of imperial ambitions or features. On the contrary, the contempt towards anything authoritarian is deeply embedded in its national culture, while the national idea (albeit not formalized and not yet legitimized via nationwide public discussions) has always revolved around freedom [volya/svoboda], agency, and absence of coercion. Specifically, no overarching nondemocratic national identity emerged in Ukraine after the USSR collapse. Still, competing notions

---

and Economist Intelligence Unit's Democracy Index ranked Russia 124th of 167 countries.

31 Bohdan Ben, "Why Has Ukraine Succeeded as a Democracy, Contrary to Russia and Belarus?" *Euromaidan Press*, March 7, 2021, https://euromaidanpress.com/2021/03/07/why-is-ukraine-a-democracy-huri-conference/.

32 Kibita, "'Why Isn't Ukraine Authoritarian?'."

33 Kolyshko, Parachchevyn, and Yavorsky, "What Ukrainians Think of Human Rights," 15-18.

34 Robert Person and Michael McFaul, "What Putin Fears Most," *Journal of Democracy* 33, no. 2 (April 2022): 18-27, https://www.journalofdemocracy.org/articles/what-putin-fears-most/.

35 Stephen Hutchings and Joanna Szostek, "Dominant Narratives in Russian Political and Media Discourse during the Ukraine Crisis," *E-International Relations*, April 28, 2015, https://www.e-ir.info/pdf/55707.

and sources of national identity exist, but none is compelling enough to monopolize power and impose its views and visions on society as a whole.[36]

The most visible level of national culture is "*behavior norms and artifacts*," [37] including expectations, norms, and symbols that signify the desired and undesired formats of societal interactions and take years to change. Behavior and artifacts are relatively the most prone to change at all levels of the national culture; however, that change is superficial and non-fundamental. Neither temporary changes in behavior nor mimicking not shared beliefs and values (even under pressure) are able to change the national culture until its underlying assumptions change.

Among the most vivid differences in the behavioral norms of Russians and Ukrainians is the expression of one's will and speaking up in times of danger and adversity. Since February 24, 2022, Russia, with a population of approximately 140 million, has demonstrated remarkable population passivity and the lack of mass protests, while Ukraine, with one-fourth of Russia's population, has had three revolutions that deeply affected society in the past 30 years alone. However, nothing is surprising in such a state of affairs. Russia is among the most atomized (incongruent) societies in the world, where, as below-quoted studies show, the citizen is a "subject" lacking the agency of systemic impact on their life and no illusions of having it.

It is particularly visible in the InfoSapiens research data [38] demonstrating Russians' passivity manifested by the admitted inability of 36 % of Russians to influence their own life (18 % of Ukrainians feel the same) and 38 % of Russians being able to influence their own life (53 % of Ukrainians feel that way). Another passivity-confirming factor is the Russians' lack of preparedness to take any specific action to stop the "special operation." While 30 % of them believe "Russia [but who exactly?] should stop the "special operation," only 19 % said they would stop the "special operation" if this decision was theirs to make. Moreover, despite the numerous public outcries about "wanting peace," the said research shows that 66 % of Russians support the "special operation" in Ukraine, 71 % feel that the "special operation" is fair, 69 % feel pride, and 64 % feel confident in the "special operation." Only 12 % of Russians feel ashamed of the "special operation."

---

[36] Yitzhak M. Brudny and Evgeny Finkel, "Why Ukraine Is Not Russia: Hegemonic National Identity and Democracy in Russia and Ukraine," *East European Politics and Societies* 25, no. 4 (November 2011): 813-833, 817-820, 828, https://doi.org/10.1177/08883 25411401379.

[37] Dartey-Baah, "The Impact of National Cultures on Corporate Cultures in Organisations," 5.

[38] Elena Koneva, Alexander Chilingaryan, and Inna Volosevych, "Mirror of the 'Military Operation,'" *InfoSapiens* (2022), 6-10, https://www.sapiens.com.ua/publications/socpol-research/230/Mirror_ENG_1_06.pdf.

InfoSapiens data above shows the contrast between Russians and Ukrainians in terms of inherent behavior norms. Russians perceive themselves as predominantly "victims" to circumstances indicative of the deeper external locus of control and delegating responsibility for decision-making to the outside forces, in this case, President Putin. Ukrainians' embedded distrust of government as a formal institution produces a highly critical view of its actions in peaceful times. Still, in critical times (such as war), society consolidates in the face of danger. For example, President Zelensky's ratings among those with strong political affiliations have grown from 26 % before February 2022 to 82 % in April 2022.

VoxUkraine research shows stark differences between preference for freedom and pro-democratic liberal values between Russians and Ukrainians. Particularly, in 2020, Ukrainians considered freedom the most important value, even compared with equality and security. To 70 %, freedom was preferable to equality, and to 30 % – preferable to security. In Russia, 55 % preferred freedom to equality and 24 % – to security. An important consideration in interpreting this data is the combination of freedom with a low level of violence perceived by Ukrainians – only 10 % admitted war could be necessary to obtain justice, with more than 25 % expressing the same view in the case of Russia. Furthermore, democracy was considered an indispensable form of governance by 82 % of Ukrainians and by 74 % of Russians.[39]

Had it not been for Russia's deeply-embedded authoritarian legacy, an argument could be made that the above-mentioned data reflects the country's multiculturality and multiethnicity. However, considering Russians' strong external locus of control, with life being overwhelmingly influenced by external forces and circumstances, the behavior norms depicted in the InfoSapiens and VoxUkraine studies appear to be strongly underpinned by the lack of agency and delegated decision-making – forced passivity, in layman words.[40]

---

[39] Larysa Tamilina, "What Makes Us, Ukrainians, Different from Russians? Aspirations for Freedom, Liberal Democracy, and Inclusive Society as the Primary Markers for the Ukrainian-Russian Divide!" *VoxUkraine*, March 24, 2022, https://voxukraine.org/en/what-makes-us-ukrainians-different-from-russians-aspirations-for-freedom-liberal-democracy-and-inclusive-society-as-the-primary-markers-for-the-ukrainian-russian-divide/.

[40] Fons Trompenaars and Charles Hampden-Turner, *Riding the Waves of Culture: Understanding Cultural Diversity in Business* (London: Nicholas Brealey, 2000), 54-155.

"I have my washing machine, my summer house is renovated, now where's my empire?" [41]

If Russia and Ukraine are so different, then why do several flagship systems analyzing national cultures (particularly Hofstede,[42] GLOBE, Trompenaars,[43,44,45] Hall [46,47]) show these two countries as having similar cultural dimensions and trajectories of values' evolution? The reason for such seemingly identical depictions lies in the research foci of Hofstede, Trompenaars, and the GLOBE authors, who view each culture as a shared set of core values guiding their member's behavior; however, each of the systems differs in the definitions of those values.[48]

Hofstede defines culture as "the collective programming of the mind that distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from another… systems of values are a core element of culture" and values as: "broad tendencies to prefer certain states of affairs over others…, systems or hierarchies which need not be in a state of harmony: most people simultaneously hold several conflicting values." [49]

Trompenaars defines culture as "the way in which a group of people solves problems and reconciles dilemmas… it organizes values into mental programs"

---

[41] A quote by Konstantin fon Eggert, a political observer for 'Dozhd' TV Channel in his interview to https://Hromadske.ua.

[42] "Hofstede Insights: Country Comparison – Ukraine and Russia," *Hofstede Insights*, https://www.hofstede-insights.com/country-comparison/russia,ukraine/.

[43] Janez Prašnikar, Marko Pahor, and Jasna Vidmar Svetlik, "Are National Cultures Still Important in International Business? Russia, Serbia and Slovenia in Comparison," *Management* 13, no. 2 (2008): 1-26, 16, https://hrcak.srce.hr/file/46579.

[44] Laura Deichmann and Line Bohn,"Scandinavian Management across Cultures: An Empirical Study of Cultural Differences between Denmark and Ukraine, " Master Thesis (May 15, 2017), 181-182, https://research-api.cbs.dk/ws/portalfiles/portal/60763285/311145_Laura_Line_master_thesis_2017.pdf.

[45] Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner, *Riding the Waves of Culture.*

[46] World Population Review 2022, "High Context Countries 2023," https://worldpopulationreview.com/country-rankings/high-context-countries.

[47] Seppo Tella, "The High Context vs. Low Context Cultures," in *Two Cultures Coming Together*, ed. Seppo Tella, Part 3. Theory and Practice in Communicative Foreign Language Methodology, Studia Paedagogica 10 (Helsinki, Finland: Department of Teacher Education, Vantaa Institute for Continuing Education, University of Helsinki, September 1996), 22-28, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/339553785_The_High_Context_vs_Low_Context_Cultures.

[48] Peter Magnusson et al., "Breaking Through the Cultural Clutter: A Comparative Assessment of Multiple Cultural and Institutional Frameworks," *International Marketing Review* 25, no. 2 (April 2008): 183-201, https://doi.org/10.1108/02651330810866272.

[49] Geert H. Hofstede, *Culture's Consequences: Comparing Values, Behaviors, Institutions, and Organizations Across Nations*, 2nd ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2001), 30-38.

and values as: "a deeper layer of culture that … give the definitions of good and bad." [50]

In GLOBE, culture is defined as "shared motives, values, beliefs, identities, and interpretations or meanings of significant events that result from common experiences of members of collectives that are transmitted across generations" and values as: "culturally endorsed expectations [of one's behavior]." [51]

Hall defined culture as: "communication and communication is culture." His studies focus on micro-level culture manifestations, specifically, conveying implicit meaning in "context" – surrounding circumstances. In Hall's logic, the meaning conveyed by high-context cultures should be interpreted with consideration of the context in which it is happening (relationships, prior history, situation, status, time, space, etc.). In contrast, low-context cultures convey meaning mainly through words, with surrounding circumstances being irrelevant for interpreting it.[52]

Neither of the mentioned approaches focuses explicitly on the influence of the country's formal and informal institutions on the differences in behavior values guide as they study higher-order constructs. In the explanations of national culture components' workings, institutions are mentioned as an influencing factor, one of three differentiators between national cultures; the other two are identity and values.[53]

The country's institutions play a decisive role in how its values and beliefs manifest through regular behavior – the institutions the country's culture shaped in the first place.[54] Suppose the country's formal institutions are effective (perform their function with no need to look for "shortcuts"), legitimate (accepted by citizens, not imposed on them), society-oriented (instead of self-preserving at any cost), congruent (do not contradict social norms), and accountable (checks and balances exist). In that case, they will function differently and produce different behaviors than they would, had the said characteristics been the opposite.[55] In other words, formal institutions are only effective if congruent with a

---

[50] Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner, *Riding the Waves of Culture*, 13-23.

[51] GLOBE Project, "Global Leadership & Organizational Behavior Effectiveness," https://GLOBEProject.com/study_2004_2007#data.

[52] James W. Neuliep, "The Cultural Context," in *Intercultural Communication: A Contextual Approach*, 8th Ed., Chapter 2 (Thousand Oaks, United States: SAGE Publications, 2020), 61-67.

[53] Geert Hofstede, Gert Jan Hofstede, and Michael Minkov, *Culture and Organizations: Software of the Mind: Intercultural Cooperation and Its Importance for Survival* (McGraw Hill, 2010), 21-23.

[54] Peter Bevington Smith and Michael Harris Bond, "Cultures and Persons: Characterizing National and Other Types of Cultural Difference Can Also Aid Our Understanding and Prediction of Individual Variability," *Frontiers in Psychology* 10 (November 2019), Article 2689, https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2019.02689.

[55] Daron Acemoglu and Matthew O. Jackson, "Social Norms and the Enforcement of Laws," Working Paper No. 20369 (Cambridge, MA: National Bureau of Economic Research, August 2014), 246-250, https://doi.org/10.3386/w20369.

country's beliefs, values, and social norms, which shape the patterns of behavior peculiar to the specific national culture.

Further, quoted research shows that the key (though not all) differences between the cultures of Russia and Ukraine revolve around the institutionally "programmed" cultural dimensions on societal and individual levels, though several (not all) dimensions of these two countries' cultures rank similarly.

In the Hofstede system, Ukraine and Russia are shown to have comparable levels of power distance (tolerance of power inequality in society), uncertainty avoidance (how threatening ambiguous situations are), and long-term orientation (strength of links between past and present, degree of pragmatism in following traditions).[56] In Trompenaars' system, both countries are collectivist, particularistic, emotional, ascription-oriented, and synchronic.[57,58]

The key reason for such similarities lies in the level of analysis Hofstede and Trompenaars apply to national cultures, which are mostly values as guiding principles for behavior norms, but not the norms themselves. For instance, of Hofstede's dimensions, because of the above-described institutional differences, power distance manifests as competing for status via domination and coercion in Russia and via establishing "links of reliable people" in Ukraine. Uncertainty avoidance in Russia manifests as top-down decision-making and minimal agency on the lowest levels of society. In contrast, in Ukraine, the same cultural dimension manifests via short-term planning and focusing on poor scenarios when making a decision.

Of Trompenaars' dimensions, predominantly ascription orientation in Russia manifests via demonstrating superiors' ability to ensure subordinates' compliance and deference through pressure and dominance. In Ukraine, the same dimension manifests via belonging to "in-group" as a pre-requisite for all kinds of cooperation – from personal to professional. Another example from the Trompenaars culture model could be the external control locus, peculiar to both Russia and Ukraine. In Russia, external control orientation manifests via voluntarily giving up agency and autonomy by those in subordinate positions to those in authoritative ones. In contrast, in Ukraine, this dimension manifests via treating rules and deadlines as movable and fluid – with circumstances being not "excuses" but valuable reasons to postpone a commitment.

Hall's system indicates Russia and Ukraine as high-context cultures within the Slavic and Central European categories.[59] However, a different context must be considered when interpreting meanings conveyed in both cultures. The particular difference lies in the ways authority (absolute in Russia and temporary in

---

[56] "Hofstede Insights: Country Comparison – Ukraine and Russia."

[57] Prašnikar, Pahor, and Svetlik, "Are National Cultures Still Important in International Business?" 16.

[58] Deichmann and Bohn,"Scandinavian Management across Cultures," 181-182.

[59] Tony Morden, "Models of National Culture – A Management Review," *Cross Cultural Management: An International Journal* 6, no. 1 (1999): 19-44, 23, https://doi.org/10.1108/13527609910796915.

Ukraine), leadership (top-down, directive in Russia and top-down, paternalistic in Ukraine), status (intimidating in Russia and approved by the "in-group" in Ukraine), and other national culture's context elements are viewed.

GLOBE Project survey data on Ukraine was not available at the time this article was written. Still, Ukraine began participating in this survey in 2020, with the data expected in the nearest future (according to the GLOBE website).

Another important consideration in comparing Russian and Ukrainian national cultures is that most systems of cross-cultural analysis (Hofstede, GLOBE, Trompenaars, Hall) view individualism and collectivism as "ends of the spectrum" and, therefore, mutually exclusive cultural "dimensions." This approach has been validated by decades of academic and empirical research. Yet, it does not fully explain the differences in the social norms and the institutionally embedded behavior patterns in countries that formally fall under the definition of "individualist" or "collectivist."

It is possible to explain the differences in manifestations of individualism and collectivism in national cultures using an approach to national cultures as "symptoms" – rooted in cross-cultural psychology, initiated by Triandis[60] and further validated through numerous academic and empirical studies. The "cultures as symptoms" approach postulates that when national cultures are analyzed on both societal and individual levels, individualism and collectivism manifest as two distinct dimensions (not "ends of the spectrum"), which are not mutually exclusive and can co-exist within one culture. In other words, there are different kinds of individualism and collectivism. In a national culture, they can co-exist in different "proportions" and "combinations," as well as come through in various forms. Collectivist societies can possess some individualistic values, beliefs, and behaviors, just as individualistic societies can exhibit features of collectivism. The frequency and the degree of these manifestations can fluctuate depending on contexts and situations.

"Horizontal patterns"[61] of societal relations are based on the assumption of egalitarianism, postulating that all members of the society are equal, and this equality (in rights, opportunities, status, potential, etc.) is the foundation for the functioning of a country's institutions. Consequently, individuals realize their uniqueness and agency, strive for productive interaction with others and focus on maintaining meaningful connections and relationships. In societies like that, hierarchical systems and relationships are not the key focus, while overall gravitation is towards more egalitarian than status-driven interaction.

---

[60] Harry C. Triandis, "The Psychological Measurement of Cultural Syndromes," *American Psychologist* 51, no. 4 (1996): 407-415, https://doi.org/10.1037/0003-066X.51.4.407.

[61] Theodore M. Singelis, Harry C. Triandis, Dharm P.S. Bhawuk, and Michele J. Gelfand, "Horizontal and Vertical Dimensions of Individualism and Collectivism: A Theoretical and Measurement Refinement," *Cross-Cultural Research* 29, no. 3 (January 1995): 240-275, https://doi.org/10.1177/106939719502900302.

"Vertical patterns" [62] of social relations are based on the assumption that all individuals in the society are different – by their place in the hierarchical institutions and relations or due to the level of status gained by moving upward in that society's systems. Consequently, countries that gravitate towards hierarchical interactions, when individuals strive to differentiate themselves from others or, better, dominate them or have higher status, give more opportunities of "getting ahead" than lower status. In such societies, people and groups are divided into "important" and "unimportant" as related to specific goals, and only the interests, rights, and goals of the former truly matter. Below, the three foundational institutional differences between Ukraine and Russia are analyzed based on the above-described institutional and methodological considerations.

Difference #1: Ukraine is a democracy with disdain for autocracy, while Russia is an autocracy with disdain for democracy

Russia is an authoritarian state with no significant periods of democratic rule throughout its history or an actionable interest in democratic societal norms.[63] In a personalist autocracy, Russia's key decisions are made by one person (the last dictator of a similar type was Stalin[64]). Studies show that only 12,5% of such dictators lose power relatively quickly and usually through death—with or without help from their closest generals—or a coup.[65] For Russia, democracy is an irrelevant and dangerous regime because it encourages autonomous thinking of the wider population, which, consequently, becomes less controllable through pressure and coercion.[66]

In Russian culture, it is not only important to differentiate from others through status but to dominate over those on the lower hierarchical levels (to the point of resorting to violence) and to demonstrate one's capability of ensuring deference, which gives access to interaction with those of comparable status.[67] Representatives of "out-groups" in such a society are "alien" and, therefore, considered "enemies."

---

[62] Singelis, Triandis, Bhawuk, and Gelfand, "Horizontal and Vertical Dimensions of Individualism and Collectivism."

[63] Michael McFaul, "Russia's Road to Autocracy," *Journal of Democracy* 32, no. 4 (October 2021): 11-26, https://www.journalofdemocracy.org/articles/russias-road-to-autocracy/.

[64] Judah, "The Terrible Truth So Many Experts Missed About Russia."

[65] Jessica L.P. Weeks, "Strongmen and Straw Men: Authoritarian Regimes and the Initiation of International Conflict," *SSRN*, December 15, 2011, 12, http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.1748516.

[66] Person and McFaul, "What Putin Fears Most."

[67] Kemmelmeier et al., "Individualism, Collectivism, and Authoritarianism in Seven Societies," 306-307.

Ukraine, on the contrary, has always been fundamentally opposed to authoritarianism, particularly due to historical factors, including frequent change of rulers (local and conquerors) with varying political stances, which have led to distinctly different paths of institutional development, sets of political behaviors and "national idea" views.[68] Democratic norms developed in regions that were under Austro-Hungarian rule.[69] The active dissident movement of the 1960s and regionalism combined with consensus-seeking politics peculiar to Ukraine on the verge of USSR collapse.[70] Besides, Ukraine has never existed long enough (i.e., centuries) in the same borders and under generations of similar rulers to allow her to develop embedded approaches to statehood of any kind, let alone authoritarian. Currently, Ukraine is classified by Freedom House as a "hybrid regime" (partially free), with a significant freedom-diminishing factor being the Russian annexation of Crimea and territories conquered in 2014 and after February 22, 2022.[71]

For Ukrainians, it is important to be successful and differentiate from others through status, but the focus is on protecting one's interests rather than dominating others. All this has to happen in synch with the "in-group" goals,[72] belonging to which improves the quality of life and allows for productive interaction with (often) weak institutions. Sacrificing one's interests for those of the "in-group" is not a "default" expectation but a conscious choice involving consideration of one's goals and status[73]; representatives of "out-groups" are "alien" but are not necessarily "enemies."

Difference #2: Collectivism in Ukraine and Russia is not of the same kind

Though both Russia and Ukraine are predominantly collectivist cultures (in all flagship systems of cross-cultural analysis), the type of collectivism in these societies is not the same, and individualism also manifests differently.

---

[68] Peisakhin, "Living Historical Legacies: The 'Why' and 'How' of Institutional Persistence," 5-8.

[69] Ben, "Why Has Ukraine Succeeded as a Democracy, Contrary to Russia and Belarus?"

[70] Kibita, "'Why Isn't Ukraine Authoritarian?'"

[71] Freedom House Country Report-2021, Ukraine.

[72] Anna Tychmanowicz, Sara Filipiak, and Zoriana Sprynska, "Extravert Individualists or Introvert Collectivists? Personality Traits and Individualism and Collectivism in Students in Poland and Ukraine," *Current Psychology* 40 (2021): 5947-5957, 5950-5954, https://doi.org/10.1007/s12144-019-00480-x.

[73] Beata Glinkowska and Viacheslav A. Chebotarov, "A Comparative Cross-Cultural Analysis of the Profile of A Modern Ukrainian Manager: The Imperatives of the Future in the Context of Internationalization," *Comparative Economic Research. Central and Eastern Europe* 21, no. 3 (2018): 63-74, 69-71, https://doi.org/10.2478/cer-2018-0019.

Ukraine historically has been a vertically collectivist society due to the high power distance, relatively conservative and hierarchical orthodox religion foundations, and high uncertainty avoidance, all of which have caused a heightened need to control "what happens tomorrow" and to always "save for the rainy day." [74] Further, the embedded intolerance of authoritarianism and the complexities of territory formation, coupled with parts of Ukraine being occupied by the two culturally different empires, have produced the "mix" of the two types of collectivism: vertical (imposed hierarchy, dominance) and horizontal (legitimized "in-group" hierarchy, dialogue).[75] This mix of collectivisms in Ukraine is additionally balanced by notably manifested vertical individualism, causing the society's gravitation towards independence and personally unique status without necessarily submitting to the authority or hierarchy (but when submitting – willingly so).[76] In other words, individual freedom (albeit within the "in-group" with legitimate rulers) is foundational in the Ukrainian national culture.

Russia has invariably been a vertically collectivist country, with this dimension of individualism-collectivism variety being dominant on individual and societal levels, largely due to the embedded legacy of authoritarianism from Tsarist to Soviet and post-Soviet times.[77] Studies show authoritarian regimes' strong propensity to be vertically collectivist, primarily manifested through rigid compliance with social norms, deference to authority, and legitimized aggression against deviant behaviors.[78]

The nature of Russia's collectivism is such that "horizontal" practices (dialogue, persuasion through explanation and argumentation, encouraging autonomous thinking and decision-making) have been suppressed in that society for centuries. This resulted in the prevalence of "vertical" practices encouraging overt aggressive dominance as a means of getting ahead in social interactions and immediate submission to the imposed authority, with persuasion, upholding agreements, and open information exchange considered signs of the "weak" unstable regimes and unreliable people.[79] Individualism in such a society manifests

---

[74] Tychmanowicz, Filipiak, and Sprynska, "Extravert Individualists or Introvert Collectivists?" 5950-5954.

[75] Leonid Borysenko, "Ukrainian Culture: Individualism or Collectivism?" in *Frontier Problems of Modern Psychology* (conference proceedings) (Kherson: Gelvetika, 2016), PsyArXiv Preprints, 60-62, https://doi.org/10.31234/osf.io/a5j2c.

[76] Leonid Borysenko, "The Structure of Cultural Syndrome 'Individualism-Collectivism' in Ukraine," Thesis for MSc in Psychology (March 2022), 87-88, https://doi.org/10.13140/RG.2.2.25349.42728. – in Ukrainian.

[77] Sharon Shavitt, Timothy P. Johnson, and Jing Zhang, "Horizontal and Vertical Cultural Differences in the Content of Advertising Appeals," *Journal of International Consumer Marketing* 23, no. 3-4 (May 1, 2011): 297-310, https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4279851/.

[78] Kemmelmeier et al., "Individualism, Collectivism, and Authoritarianism in Seven Societies," 304, 306, 307.

[79] Chirkov et al., "Differentiating Autonomy from Individualism and Independence," 98, 104.

predominantly on the highest levels of the societal hierarchies – meaning that one has to "prove oneself to the in-group" and to "deserve" the right to self-expression by dominating and overpowering others.

Difference #3: Different roles, characters, and developmental legacies of institutions in Ukraine and Russia

Ukraine has a historical legacy of complex development of formal institutions, particularly due to the extended periods of being subject to drastically different "treatments" from the conquering countries. With the dismemberment of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth in 1772 and 1795, the territory of today's Western Ukraine was divided between Russian and Austrian empires. In the following 150 years, the population was subjected to rather different "influences" of the respective conquerors: suppression of Ukrainian national identity, language, and culture under Russia and relative support and allowance of practicing "Ukrainianness" under Austria.[80] In 1939, the former subjects of the two said empires were reunited within the borders of Soviet Ukraine, with the country gaining full independence in 1991. These "institutional legacies" of the pre-independence periods persisted well into modern times, surviving more than 50 years of Soviet rule. In 2013, 25 % more Ukrainians in the "ex-Russian" territories were willing to be associated with Russia, not Europe, and 15 % less – willing to be involved in protests than in "ex-Austrian." [81]

The described longevity of social attitudes and behaviors is explained by the strength of the informal institutions in Ukrainian society – tight local social networks (communities) with strong nodal actors from the local "elites." National identities and associated beliefs, values, and behaviors these actors internalize have persisted practically unchanged as long as the community lasted.[82] This phenomenon of "tight networks of trusted people" explains the predominant reliance of the Ukrainians on informal, rather than formal, institutions and seeking acquaintances or "recommended persons" when interacting with the latter – as "insurance" of sorts, in case the formal institution does not perform its function.

At the same time, trust in formal institutions has historically been low in Ukraine – with rare exceptions when the said institutions played an obviously instrumental role in society. In the fall of 2022, the only institutions enjoying the highest trust of Ukrainians were the church (70 %) and mostly those associated with protecting the country: armed forces (96 %) and humanitarian aid NGOs (78 %). Universities enjoyed mid-level trust (62 %) and police (55 %), while the

---

[80] Leonid V. Peisakhin, "In History's Shadow: Do Formal Institutions Leave a Cultural Legacy?" EPSA 2013 Annual General Conference Paper 286, *SSRN*, January 1, 2013, 5-7, https://ssrn.com/abstract=2224765.

[81] Peisakhin, "In History's Shadow: Do Formal Institutions Leave a Cultural Legacy?" 21, 24.

[82] Peisakhin, "In History's Shadow: Do Formal Institutions Leave a Cultural Legacy?" 32.

government was trusted by 51.5 % and simultaneously distrusted by 48 %, television was trusted by 51 % and distrusted by 49 %, the press was trusted by 49 % and distrusted by 50 %. Political parties were distrusted by 77 % of Ukrainians, courts – distrusted by 72 %, banks – by 66 %, Verkhovna Rada – by 77 %, big business – by 57 %, and elections as an institution – by 56 % of the population.[83]

The pattern of Russia's institutional development is drastically different from that of Ukraine – mainly due to the impact of its authoritarian legacy on the functioning of institutions. Among the key societal outcomes of authoritarian regimes is suppressed autonomy of the population, with suppressed volition and forced compliance with norms, reflecting the interests of the "higher ups" in the societal hierarchy.[84] This leads to the population's passivity (36 % of Russians score the ability to change their lives at 1-4 on a scale of 1-10[85]), embedded distrust in formal institutions due to their punitive and coercive nature, and resentment of the elites by those at the bottom of the societal hierarchy – to the point when corrupt behavior is viewed as one of the ways to "get back" at or "beat" the system.[86] This combination of outcomes leads to the state of denial of the majority of the Russian population about the war in Ukraine. "It's not a war, but a special operation," "civilians will not be harmed," and "we didn't attack anyone" are not just propaganda narratives. These are "mantras" most Russians truly believe because of generations-long brainwashing by "people upstairs who know better."

Another peculiar characteristic of the Russian culture in the institutional context (e.g., superior-subordinate relations) is the link between trust and control, drastically different from that of Europe, Ukraine included. In most European cultures, trust and control are mutually exclusive phenomena: the higher the superior's trust in the subordinate, the lower will be the degree of control exercised to ensure the work is done. In Russian culture, trust and control co-exist and are not mutually exclusive, producing a co-dependent relationship in which a superior is incapable of fully trusting a subordinate. The latter is expecting, even wishing, to be tightly controlled, thus delegating the agency and the responsibility for their actions and decisions to the former.[87]

[83] "Trust of Ukrainians to Social Institutions-2022," *Razumkov Center*, https://razumkov.org.ua/napriamky/sotsiologichni-doslidzhennia/otsinka-gromadianamy-sytuatsii-v-kraini-dovira-do-sotsialnykh-instytutiv-politykoideologichni-oriientatsii-gromadian-ukrainy-v-umovakh-rosiiskoi-agresii-veresen-zhovten-2022r. – in Ukrainian.

[84] Kemmelmeier et al., "Individualism, Collectivism, and Authoritarianism in Seven Societies," 306-307.

[85] Koneva, Chilingaryan, and Volosevych, "Mirror of the 'Military Operation,'" 6-10.

[86] Lewis, *When Cultures Collide*, 372-379.

[87] Virpi Outila, Irina Mihailova, B. Sebastian Reiche, and Rebecca Piekkari, "A Communicative Perspective on the Trust-control Link in Russia," *Journal of World Business* 55, no. 6 (October 2020): 100971, 4-11, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jwb.2018.11.001.

Evidence from numerous studies shows that Ukrainian and Russian peoples, despite the history of interaction and relative geographical proximity, differ significantly in terms of state governance legacy, interconnection and type of individualism and collectivism, and pattern of institutional development. Despite some similarities in cultural dimensions of power distance, uncertainty avoidance, and a long-term orientation, the differing underlying assumptions of Ukrainian and Russian cultures set different paths of how beliefs, values, and behaviors manifest on an institutional and individual level. And with the key difference between the two peoples being a strong preference for autonomy, decentralized decision-making, and disdain for coercion (Ukraine) and coercive submission, upward-delegated responsibility, and legitimized aggression (Russia), there is nothing "fraternal" about them.

Conclusion

Considering the relatively scarce evidence of cross-cultural studies on Ukraine specifically and in comparison to Russia, this article sets the framework for further research. The insufficiencies of predominantly values-based cultural analysis (albeit valid and evidence-based) do not allow to reveal the differences between Ukraine's and Russia's national cultures fully. Among the prospective research areas is the degree of institutional legacies' path-dependence and impact on behavior norms in these two countries. Another potentially fruitful research area could be the regional subcultures' dimensions in Ukraine and Russia, considering the size and the internal ethnic diversity of both countries. Such studies could add value and help clarify the findings through macro-level culture analysis frameworks, such as those of Hofstede and Trompenaars. Of particular interest is the "frontier culture" of Ukraine, as Borysenko [88] calls it, that is not easily classified as collectivist or individualist but has both these dimensions manifesting simultaneously. Triandis' paradigm with horizontal and vertical collectivism/individualism dimensions could provide a solid methodological framework for such studies.

This article certainly has its limitations, mainly due to the lacking cross-cultural studies data on Ukraine. Another promising research area is the cross-disciplinary analysis of the influence of formal and informal institutions in Ukraine and Russia on each country's economic outcomes and relevant citizens' behavior norms: decision-making, compliance with laws, perceptions of and attitudes to corruption/nepotism, pre-requisites, and outcomes of societal trust. As Peisakhin [89,90] outlines in his work, such studies will help establish what types of institutions have the most impact, for what reasons, how they change behavior

---

[88] Borysenko, "Ukrainian Culture: Individualism or Collectivism?" 61.

[89] Peisakhin, "In History's Shadow: Do Formal Institutions Leave a Cultural Legacy?" 34-35.

[90] Peisakhin, "Living Historical Legacies: The 'Why' and 'How' of Institutional Persistence," 31.

patterns in national culture, and whether the impact continues after the institution has ceased to exist (e.g., an authoritarian government).

Exploring the manifestations of horizontal or vertical individualism and collectivism in Ukraine and Russia could be a rather promising area, as Triandis' national culture analysis system has been the most instrumental in showing the underpinnings of differences between these countries' cultures.

Disclaimer

The views expressed are solely those of the author and do not represent official views of the PfP Consortium of Defense Academies and Security Studies Institutes, participating organizations, or the Consortium's editors.

About the Author

Maryna Starodubska holds MSc in Human Resource Management from the University of London, Birkbeck College. She is an Adjunct Professor at the Kyiv-Mohyla Business School (Ukraine), Visiting Lecturer at Delta Management School, Tartu University (Estonia), the School of Business and Governance, Tallinn Technological University (Estonia), and L'Institut Magellan Paris (France). In addition, she is a Managing Partner at TLFRD Strategic Communications & Management Consultancy. *E-mail*: starodubska@tlfrd.com

Research Article

The Impact of War on the Ukraine Military Education System: Moving Forward in War and Peace

Serhii Salkutsan [1] *and Al Stolberg* [2]

[1]   *Ministry of Defense of Ukraine, https://www.mil.gov.ua*

[2]   *RAND Corporation, https://www.rand.org*

Abstract: The Russian invasion of Ukraine and Ukraine's subsequent and ongoing combat successes have proven that agile, adaptive leaders can triumph against a better-equipped enemy. The foundational educational reforms within the Ukrainian Armed Forces, begun in 2018, have paid incalculable dividends. This article examines Ukraine's Professional Military Education (system) before and during the war and proposes a policy to continue to prioritize training and education now and in the future.

Keywords: Ukraine, education, reform, professional military education, PME, National Defense University.

Introduction

In the initial analysis of the impact of the Russo-Ukrainian war, it is critical to understand the experience and results of Ukraine's defense reform. This is especially true for the reform of military education, which has been ongoing since 2014 and formally institutionalized in 2018 with the signing of the policy on "Military Education and Training of Military Specialists." [1]

---

[1]   Ukraine Ministry of Defence, "Military Education and Training of Military Specialists, 2018," *ArmiyaInform*, October 7 2021, in Ukrainian, https://armyinform.com.ua/2021/10/07/pislya-vnesennya-zmin-do-chynnogo-zakonodavstva-systema-vijskovoyi-osvity-zapraczyuye-po-novomu-pershyj-zastupnyk-ministra-oborony-ivan-rusnak/.

It was clear that there were significant and obvious differences in approaches to training, planning, employment, sustainment, and command and control between the armed forces of the Russian Federation and the Armed Forces of Ukraine (AFU). In essence, these differences have constituted an advantage for Ukraine in many areas of the current conflict. They have denied the ability of Russian forces to attain their strategic wartime goals (what the Russian "special military operation" was calling "denazification" and "demilitarization" of Ukraine).

It is important to remember that Ukraine has no decisive advantage over Russia in armaments and military equipment (neither in quantity nor in quality). Prior to the initial full-scale Russian aggression on 24 February 2022, the Russian Federation was constantly increasing its spending on the armed forces. According to a Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) assessment, Russian defense spending in 2021 was 65.9 billion U.S. dollars, an increase of 2.9 % over 2020.[2] The same report indicates that 2021 Ukraine military spending was 5.9 billion U.S. dollars (3.2 % of GDP). Russian casualties sustained during the first phase of the large-scale invasion were more than ten times higher than those of Ukraine.[3] This demonstrates that the main factor for the success of the AFU was not material. It occurred despite the disadvantage of available resources.

In addition, over the last eight years, Russia has deliberately implemented a military strategy of domination to attain the goals identified in the Russian Military Doctrine published in 2014.[4] Throughout the recent past, Russia has also taken active measures to decrease Ukraine's defense capacity by employing hybrid war or grey zone tools. Under such conditions, one of the key aspects that defined a required level of readiness for the AFU to be prepared to successfully resist enemy forces was the use of a full spectrum of Western resources. This includes adopting a model of intellectual leadership that uses Western practices and procedures (doctrine) and mastering and integrating Western military equipment into AFU operations.

Going forward, a paramount means of achieving military success should be the continued implementation of Western approaches and procedures for AFU operational activity. This was demonstrated by the successful AFU defensive operations in northern Ukraine during February-March 2022 when Ukraine had not

---

2   Marina Baranovskaya, "Stockholm International Peace Research Institute: Trends in World Military Expenditure in 2021," *DW*, April 25, 2022, https://www.dw.com/ru/doklad-sipri-rossija-v-pjaterke-stran-s-krupnejshimi-oboronnymi-bjudzhetami/a-61547137 .

3   Ukrainian Military Center, March 12, 2022, https://mil.in.ua/uk/news/z-pochatku-povnomasshtabnoyi-vijny-zagynuly-1300-vijskovyh-ukrayiny.

4   Ministry of Defense, "The Russian Doctrine of the Russian Federation," December 25, 2014, https://www.mchs.gov.ru/dokumenty/2940.

yet obtained heavy weapons from the West. The employment of modern doctrine was a key factor in the success of that defense. Doctrine, not weaponry alone, is decisive.

A concept for utilization of the Western model of military leadership was established as a foundation for Ukraine's military educational reform. This envisages forming a modern military culture based on critical thinking in the Officer and NCO Corps of a nation. According to the United States Joint Chiefs of Staff, this is a key factor for victory in modern war.[5] Leaders are needed that are intellectually superior to their adversaries. This particular aspect can allow the AFU to successfully deter the adversary in conventional war conditions, fought with third and fourth-generation weapons, and with the enemy's quantitative advantage.

Along with other broader strategic goals, for the concept of a Professional Military Education (PME) system to be successful, it is essential to implement fundamental changes in the contents of academic curricula. This is a curriculum that should be viewed as a basis for change in the professional mentality of the Officer Corps within the Armed Forces of Ukraine. Substantial changes in the military education system are needed to develop new competencies in future military professionals. This will require creating a new educational capacity in military education institutions and transforming some existing capacities.

The critical importance of these military education system changes emerged with the events of Maidan Square in 2014 and significantly increased after the beginning of the current fighting. Given the ensuing Russian-supported military operations to occupy Crimea and Donbas regions, the need for the AFU to modernize and professionalize in the face of the expanded threat became critical for the survival of the Ukrainian state. The AFU's PME system would be key to supporting this significant change.

Why Are the Proposed Changes Necessary Now?

Ukraine is going to find itself in a new reality after the war is over. Even now, it can understand the advantage of adaptive, flexible, and modern armed forces in confrontation with a military system that has not adapted to the needs of 21st-Century warfare. The Russian Armed Forces have employed obsolete models of training, command and control, force deployment, and sustainment. The initial success of the AFU was based on their movement away from these obsolete post-Soviet approaches in training and education. In fact, eight years of changes in the AFU have formed the foundation for a new quality professional, resulting

---

5   The Joint Chiefs of Staff, "Developing Today's Joint Officers for Tomorrow's Ways of War: The Joint Chiefs of Staff Vision and Guidance for Professional Military Education and Talent Management," May 1, 2022, https://www.jcs.mil/Portals/36/Documents/ Doctrine/education/jcs_pme_tm_vision.pdf?ver=2020-05-15-102429-817.

in the creation of a new generation of Ukrainian military leaders.[6] They are trained to understand the modern information environment and the role of joint operations and are able to skillfully take advantage of informational awareness during operational planning and execution.

Aware of the adversary's significant quantitative, technical, and technological advantages, Ukraine was forced to prepare for a potential large-scale Russian invasion. The response to the attack was based on the utilization of the indirect or asymmetric approach.[7] This approach is about the exploitation of vulnerabilities in Russia's implementation of Soviet military doctrine, where success in a conventional conflict is based on an advantageous correlation of forces that emphasize massed armor/mechanized formations while having significant quantitative superiority and technological dominance in the air and with artillery/missile forces.

Ukraine's response was based on the utilization of a *Mission Command* philosophy that allowed flexibility in command and control and the successful execution of small unit tactics. It also required good employment of well-known terrain to delay the Russian advance and avoid large battles to preserve Ukrainian combat power. The efficiency of the resistance increased because of higher morale, an advantage in situational awareness, and better-balanced logistics, which enabled increased sustainability and allowed the conduct of successful strikes on critical Russian force elements such as logistical supply chains and command and control.

These aspects that enhanced Ukraine's successes on the battlefield should be researched further in the future. However, the foundation of changes implemented by the AFU thus far is already apparent: a new format of individual and collective training (this included the utilization of the full capacity of all military training and educational institutions along with simulation centers); operational experience gained by employment in Anti-Terrorist Operations and of Joint Forces Operations in the Donbas region between 2014-2022); development of a professional Non-Commissioned Officers Corps; and changes in the officer and NCO way of thinking based on the implementation of progressive educational programs, were critical factors. It is clear that the principles of *Mission Command* and associated *Leadership* concepts must be inseparable elements of officer and NCO training programs at tactical and operational levels.[8]

All these concepts, key for a 21st-Century military, are based on approaches that are currently being implemented and adopted by NATO member states.

---

6   Neveen Shaaban Abdalla et al, "Intelligence and the War in Ukraine: Part 2," *War on the Rocks Blog*, May 19, 2022, https://warontherocks.com/2022/05/intelligence-and-the-war-in-ukraine-part-2/.

7   Liddell Hart, *The Strategy of Indirect Approach* (Meridan Publishers, 1941), https://archive.org/details/strategyofindire035126mbp/mode/2up.

8   National Defence University of Ukraine, "Syllabus Module: General Tactics, 2021-2022," unpublished paper, https://nuou.org.ua/assets/documents/sulabys-model-8-l3-ukr.pdf, https://nuou.org.ua/assets/documents/silabus-modulyu-4-l-2-sv.pdf.

Ukraine is adopting those same NATO standards throughout the force. According to the General Staff, as of mid-2021, over 300 NATO Standards were in various stages of being adopted by the Armed Forces.[9]

Ukraine received significant support for these changes to the Ukraine PME system from the Defense Education Enhancement Program (DEEP). As a joint NATO/Partnership for Peace Consortium (PfPC) effort, the DEEP program was created in 2007 to support the modernization and professionalization of NATO partner PME schools: war colleges, staff colleges, junior officer courses, military academies, NCO academies, language training schools, and schools designed to train Ministry of Defense civilians. This support emphasizes curriculum development (what to teach), faculty development (how to teach), and institutional support (administration and management of a school).[10]

Since 2013, DEEP support has been provided to 11 different Ukraine PME schools: the National Defense University of Ukraine (NDUU), seven pre-commissioning schools (Kharkiv, Kyiv, L'viv, Odesa, Zhytomyr), and three NCO Training Centres. As of the period just prior to the 24 February 2022 Russian attack, this included:

- The NDUU transitioned its war college/staff college-level courses to NATO-standard curricula.
- Every PME school had created courses and was teaching NATO-standard Troop Leading Procedures/Military Decision-Making Process/ Joint Operational Planning Process planning and decision-making as appropriate to the mission of the specific school.
- NATO-standard NCO Basic, Intermediate, Advanced, Command Senior Enlisted Leader (CSEL), and NCO Basic and Advanced Instructor Courses had been created and were being taught.
- A minimum of 600 hours of English Language Training became required in every pre-commissioning school.[11]

Today it is evident that additional lessons learned from the current wartime Ukraine experience must be institutionalized within the military education system. More importantly, the education and training system should continue outpacing the current processes to ensure the successful implementation of the fu-

---

9   "Fully Developed NATO Standards, Now the Decision on the Alliance – Commander-in-Chief of the UAF," *Radio Liberty*, February 26, 2021, www.radiosvoboda.org/a/news-zaluzhnyi-ukraina-nato/31478997.html.

10 Trevor Johnston and Alan G. Stolberg, *The Challenges and Opportunities of Institution Capacity Building Through Professional Military Education: Lessons from the Defense Education Enhancement Program*, Research Report (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, Summer/Fall 2022), 4-5, https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RRA1238-1.html.

11 Partnership for Peace Consortium, "Defense Education Enhancement Program Overview Brief," unpublished briefing, August 5, 2022.

ture vision for the AFU. As evidenced by the support provided by the DEEP program, external assistance will continue to be available to facilitate future changes in Ukraine's PME system.

What Is Going to Change in the Armed Forces?

It will be necessary to review all current approaches to learning military art. By necessity, this must include addressing the overall system of operational standards currently in use by the AFU. Remnants of post-Soviet approaches are likely to become things of the past. At the same time, this review process would need to ensure simultaneous integration of the AFU's experience of employment and new approaches of the NATO states into the content of doctrinal publications. Doctrinal changes will have already begun to form based on analysis of the ongoing conflict.

Refinement of NATO/EU and global allied approaches to the war is inevitable.[12] Sharing its experience, Ukraine is likely to play a lead role in a global process of learning lessons and implementation in analytic products to ensure the development of the defense capabilities of the Western states.

The modern generation of military leaders of the AFU should actively engage in an exchange of lessons learned/best practices in the areas of force training, operational maneuver and fire employment, command and control, and logistics/sustainment. This would facilitate the deepening of cooperation between Ukraine with members of the Alliance and its global partners and transition to a different level of trust and relationship with the Allies, which, at this stage, is of utmost importance for the AFU.

As a result of extensive combat employment, the AFU will face the necessity of total re-armament with Western military equipment even while the war is ongoing. Ukraine will also require continuous equipment supplies from NATO and EU states, which should continue in the post-war period.[13] There will be a sharp decrease in the percentage of Soviet equipment in Ukraine, requiring the implementation of NATO standards in logistics and force employment at the tactical level.

How Should the Military Training and Education System Change?

Given the current conflict and the many lessons being learned, it will be important to accelerate the implementation of NATO standards into the military

---

[12] David Johnson, "The Army Risks Reasoning Backwards in Analyzing Ukraine," *War on the Rocks Blog*, June 14, 2022, https://warontherocks.com/2022/06/the-army-risks-reasoning-backwards-in-analyzing-ukraine/.

[13] Alexei Reznikov, "Three Types of 155-mm Artillery are Already Successfully Operating on the Front Line – the M777 Howitzer, the FH70 Howitzer, the CAESAR ACS. Ukraine Received ACS M109," *Ministry of Defence of Ukraine Website*, May 28, 2022, https://www.mil.gov.ua/news/2022/05/28/na-peredovij-vzhe-uspishno-praczyuyut-tri-vidi-155-mm-artilerii-%E2%80%93-gaubiczya-m777-gaubiczya-fh70-sau-caesar-v-ukrainu-nadijshli-sau-m109-%E2%80%93-oleksij-reznikov.

training and education process, in part because employment of modern military equipment, primarily of Western origin, is best utilized with Western doctrine. The need to make these changes will significantly impact curricula and training programs at all levels, beginning from familiarizing with a particular weapon system and the associated adaptations to unit tactics and operations.

At the same time, implementing such programs will require a paradigm shift in the military education system. An important aspect of the change lies in the selection of a modern vision for the system as a whole, as well as a strategy for developing military education institutions. The experience of the National Defence University of Ukraine (NDUU) suggests that the integration of leadership programs at the tactical, operational, and strategic levels in 2019-2022 forced them to substantially review not only the content of military education but also relationships among faculties (departments) of the University, as well as the relationship between the teacher and the student.[14] A new Strategy of the University was adopted, focusing on the implementation of a student-centered approach as key for the change[15] and envisaging the re-constitution of all processes involved in the management of the educational institution. In essence, these changes will represent the introduction of modern military culture to the students and faculty of the NDUU.

What Changes Would Mean for Military Education Institutions?

The fact that formal reform of the military education system has been ongoing since 2018 could permit the lessons learned from the Russia-Ukraine war to catalyze a major qualitative transformation of the system. However, the system should not wait until the war is over for the new changes to begin.

Military education institutions have to actively participate in the development of a new approach to teaching military art and create respective academic curricula. Content improvement should be made in parallel with the revision of teaching methodologies. Meeting the requirements of the changes should be a foundation for military education institutional success. When addressing this issue, it would be helpful to outpace the flow of real-world events, allowing the education system to anticipate 3 to 5 years in the future.

Military educational institutions must create processes to identify and integrate new lessons learned based on interaction with graduates and the needs of their future assignments. It is necessary to address practical issues of improvement of education content and academic components in different areas, emphasizing practical elements of education, such as case studies, exercises, simulations, field trips, and practicums. The upgrading and enhancement of the curric-

---

[14] National Defence University of Ukraine, "National Defence University of Ukraine Named After Ivan Chernyakhovsky," 2019, https://nuou.org.ua/assets/documents/nduu-2019.pdf.

[15] National Defence University of Ukraine, "National Defence University Strategy 2020-2025," 2020, https://nuou.org.ua/assets/documents/strategy-nduu-2020-2025.pdf.

ula must be coordinated with how it is taught to the students. Instructor application of modern teaching methodologies that focus on active learning and student critical thinking will be essential for the making of 21st-Century leaders. In turn, strong critical thinking skills will allow for an easier understanding of the NATO-standard Mission Command concept and its employment in an operational environment.

Military Education and Training Challenges during Wartime

A separate area for research and analysis is the ability of a military education and training system to operate during times of war. This should include the ability to provide adequate sustained training for all categories of civilians (Ukrainian citizens) to allow them to be able to rapidly adapt to the conditions of war. In particular, it will be critical to review approaches to the sustainment of the military education and training system during conditions of the constant threat of enemy strikes across the entire country.

These are very difficult problems to solve. The expectation that military educational institutions would relocate, transition to shortened programs, or conclude cadet pre-commissioning training did not occur after the Russian attack. The result is that the process of transition to specific wartime training programs appears to be long-lasting and requires the availability of time, which is not necessarily present in wartime conditions.

The problem becomes more complicated because of a need to temporarily transition from a higher education standard to practical military education needed for wartime usage. This will require a system in place to ensure that students are able to study the curricula they missed after the fighting is over. Under these conditions, many peacetime education standards will likely not be applicable in wartime. At the same time, following existing approaches, continuation and completion of education should be in accordance with the current standard after the fighting ends.

All existing programs will require review for potential change: Officer, NCO, and those offering graduate and undergraduate degrees. They must all become components of a fully integrated future military education system. It will be necessary to find an intelligent balance between education and training; allow service members to study in a way that is comfortable for them throughout their career, either in residence, online, or a hybrid of the two. A 21st-Century military professional will need varied education and training at every level of military service.

As an example, it will be appropriate to analyze potential ways to ensure coordination between the civilian education used to supplement officer and NCO military education and training and for military education and training to prepare civilians for the rigor of military service. This encompasses opportunities for commissioned and non-commissioned officers to get non-military education degrees in the civilian system of education and obtain military education for civilians who already have an education degree from civilian educational institutions. At the

mid-grade officer level, it will be appropriate to actively provide incentives for officer professional development in business schools [16] to ensure flexibility and alternative approaches to thinking (non-military) and enrichment of available tools for non-standard leadership decision-making.

As described earlier, the focus for the future transformation of the Armed forces of Ukraine's military education and training system will reside with the Euro-Atlantic community. To ensure maximum opportunity for success, several other components of the military system will have to be in place and fully coordinated with each other:

1. Both the officer and NCO human resource systems will have to be transformed/adjusted to ensure that ALL personnel is scheduled/ required to go to schools/courses at specific times in their careers – either through in-person or online attendance. Promotions and the ability to assume certain job positions must be tied to such a system for all levels.

2. For the re-equipping of the AFU with all Western weapons and maintenance/supply chains—an internal Ukraine industrial base change will have to take place—where some of this will start being produced in Ukraine by Ukrainians. It will be impossible for Ukraine to depend on the West forever in these areas, and clearly, Ukraine wants to be self-sufficient. This will mean a greater emphasis on logistics/supply chain management education in various schools/courses.

3. English Language Training and associated student proficiency will have to be a requirement for promotion and attainment of certain positions.

Continued cooperation with NATO and EU states and adopting key lessons learned from the Russia-Ukraine war will ensure maximum opportunity for real change. Since the Russian invasion began on 24 February 2022, the AFU has demonstrated its ability to maximize its presence on the battlefield. To be able to have an enduring capacity for similar success in the future, its military education and training will have to be able to do the same**.**

---

[16] Ben Buchheim-Jurisson and Joseph Mellone, "Helping the Leadership Lead," *War on the Rocks Blog*, June 30, 2022, https://warontherocks.com/2022/06/helping-the-leadership-lead/.

Disclaimer

About the Authors

MG Serhii Salkutsan was named the Military Representative for Ukraine to NATO in 2022. He previously served for more than seven years as the Deputy Commandant for Education Affairs at the National Defence University of Ukraine. During this period (2016 and 2020-2021), he deployed on operational tours to the combat zone in the Donetsk region of Ukraine.

Dr. Alan G. Stolberg has been a retired U.S. Army Colonel and the U.S. Coordinator for the Defense Education Enhancement Program (DEEP) since 2013. He has served on both the U.S. Army and Naval War College faculties for a total of 15 years. Dr. Stolberg was the first DEEP academic lead and has supported the program since its inception in 2007. He has also worked with Ukraine since 1997 when he was the chief of the U.S. European Command's (USEUCOM) J5 division responsible for U.S. military policy, strategy, and political-military issues for all nations in the USEUCOM area of responsibility.

Research Article

Distorting Your Perception of Russia's Aggression: How Can We Combat Information Warfare?

Ho Ting (Bosco) Hung

London School of Economics and Political Science, https://www.lse.ac.uk/

Abstract: Despite the brutality of the Russian invasion of Ukraine, support or sympathy toward Russia is shown by some actors on the international stage. This could be attributed to the multi-facet information warfare conducted by Russia and its strategic partner China. However, the analysis of information warfare during the current war remains scattered. This article, therefore, adopts a documentary analysis of relevant documents and media sources to conceptualize the forms of information warfare used by these two countries to contribute to future studies. It then proceeds to discuss that the Russia-Ukraine war implies a growing use of information warfare in present and future wars under digitalization. Facing a growing threat posed to people's cognitive understanding, the democratic community has to be aware of this increasingly dangerous military strategy and develop corresponding solutions. This article suggests that different societal stakeholders must collaborate to develop comprehensive education and thus strengthen digital citizenship. This is vital to nurturing people into critical and responsible citizens, thus equipping themselves with the resilience needed to combat information warfare.

Keywords: Information warfare, propaganda, disinformation, Russia-Ukraine war, China, digital citizenship.

Introduction

Russia's brutal invasion of Ukraine clearly violates Ukraine's territorial integrity and international law. The West has shown unity in countering Russia by imposing unprecedentedly harsh sanctions. In addition to policy action taken by national governments, local citizens in Western countries have also demonstrated their discontent with Russia's aggression by launching a series of large-scale pro-

tests.[1] However, the widespread outrage against Russia is far from universal. Numerous countries and individuals have voiced their support or sympathy for Russia and aired their grievances with Western leadership in international conferences, press conferences, or media platforms.

Such pro-Russian or anti-Western attitudes could be explained by the extensive circulation of manipulated information by Russia and its long-standing strategic partner China. Nonetheless, the analysis of information warfare used by these two countries during the war remains scattered. This article contributes to the security discussion by examining information warfare during the ongoing Russia-Ukraine war. The article argues that the war demonstrates how information warfare can help the aggressors mobilize support, suggesting that with increasing digitalization, information warfare will become a more utilized tool. It thus becomes more urgent and important for the democratic community to promote digital citizenship to combat manipulated content.

Since the full-scale Russia-Ukraine war started recently, there is a lack of peer-reviewed scholarly literature directly discussing the war and the use of information warfare. Therefore, this article presents its findings mainly through content and documentary analysis of official and media publications in Russian, English, and Chinese. The author used the relevant keywords for searching and came up with the analysis by identifying the most relevant materials.

This article first conceptualizes the term information warfare. Next, it provides a comprehensive overview of Russia and China's use of information warfare during the Russia-Ukraine war. Then it discusses the implication of using information warfare in the Russia-Ukraine war on future international rivalries. Finally, the article highlights the importance of digital citizenship to provide solutions for individuals and governments to prevent the distortion of people's cognitive understanding. It concludes that the Russia-Ukraine war serves to warn us to invest in developing resilience against increasingly invasive information warfare.

Information Warfare

The term information warfare, or information war, was developed by Russia and is widely used. Since the early 1990s, Igor Panarin has been leading the discussion of information warfare.[2] He considers information warfare a psychological

---

[1] Andrew Anthony, "March in Support of Ukraine in London: Everything Was Turning Blue and Yellow," *The Guardian*, March 27, 2022, https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2022/mar/27/march-in-support-of-ukraine-in-london-everything-was-turning-blue-and-yellow.

[2] Ofer Fridman, "'Information War' as the Russian Conceptualisation of Strategic Communications," *The RUSI Journal* 165, no. 1 (2020): 44-53, 46, https://doi.org/10.1080/03071847.2020.1740494.

confrontation aiming to influence the rivals' informational environment and protect a party's environment and thus achieve certain goals.[3] Other scholars, such as Vladimir Lisichkin and Leonid Shelepin, also contribute similar ideas. They suggest that information warfare aims at influencing people's souls to pressure the domestic audience to act according to the state's interest and split their rival's citizens to eliminate resistance.[4]

In the Russian context, information warfare is an offensive tool adopted by the West to disseminate pro-West information to undermine Russia's influence or destabilize Russia.[5] Russia also acknowledges information warfare's strengths in promoting its own narratives. Thus, it actively develops information warfare to gain the capability of influencing public opinions and counteracting Western influence. For example, the President of Russia, Vladimir Putin, declared that

> Our diplomats understand, of course, how important the battle to influence public opinion and shape the public mood is these days. We have given these issues much attention over recent years. However, today, as we face a growing barrage of information attacks unleashed against Russia by some of our so-called partners, we need to make even greater efforts in this direction.
>
> We are living in an information age, and the old saying that whoever controls information controls the world unquestionably sums up today's reality...
>
> … We must put up strong resistance to the Western media's information monopoly, including by using all available methods to support Russian media outlets operating abroad. Of course, we must also act to counter lies about Russia and not allow falsifications of history.[6]

Interestingly, Chinese scholars share with Russian scholars similar thoughts on information warfare. The ancient Chinese scholar Sun Tzu famously discussed how information confrontation helps win the battle against other countries.[7]

3   Igor Panarin and Lyubov' Panarina, *Informatsionnaya voyna i mir [Information War and the World]* (Moscow: OLMA-Press, 2003), quoted in Fridman, "'Information War' as the Russian Conceptualisation of Strategic Communications."

4   Vladimir Lisichkin and Leonid Shelepin, *Tret'ya mirovaya informatsionno-psikholog-icheskaya voyna* [The Third World Informational-Psychological War] (Moscow: Es-kimo-Algoritm, 2003), 17.

5   Ofer Fridman, "The Russian Perspective on Information Warfare: Conceptual Roots and Politicisation in Russian Academic, Political, and Public Discourse," *Defence Strategic Communications* 2, no. 1 (2017): 61-86, 62, 77, https://stratcomcoe.org/publications/the-russian-perspectiveon-information-warfare-conceptual-roots-and-politicisation-in-russian-academic-political-and-public-discourse/194.

6   Vladimir Putin, "Meeting of Russian Federation Ambassadors and Permanent Envoys," transcript of a speech delivered at the Russian Foreign Ministry, Moscow, June 30, 2016, http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/52298.

7   Evgeniya Yu. Katkova and Anna S. Yunyushkina, "Chinese Concepts and Opportunities in Information Warfare: China-US Rivalry in Cyberspace," *RUDN Journal of World History* 14, no. 2 (2022): 197-210, 198, https://doi.org/10.22363/2312-8127-2022-14-2-197-210.

Contemporary scholars also echo Sun Tzu's ideas. For instance, the father of Chinese information warfare, Shen Weiguang, considers information war a measure to influence one's cognitive and trust systems to control the enemy and preserve the country.[8]

Realizing how information affects survival, the Chinese government has devoted more attention to information warfare. In 2003, the Chinese Communist Party Central Committee and the Central Military Commission set forth the Three Warfares (三战), including psychological warfare (心理战), public opinion warfare (舆论战), and legal warfare (法律战).[9] The People's Liberation Army's recent texts, such as the 2013 Science of Military Strategy and 2014 Introduction to Public Opinion Warfare, Psychological Warfare, and Legal Warfare, have continued to incorporate the Three Warfare into China's military thinking systematically.[10] This reflects China's increasing emphasis on how people's cognitive understanding can influence the development of its strategic competition. Accordingly, China emulates Russia by using information campaigns to promote pro-China narratives, such as during the Covid-19 pandemic, to confront the West.[11]

Meanwhile, the West, especially the United States, has considered Russia and China a threat to the Western-dominated world order. Therefore, in the eyes of Western scholars or governments, the term information warfare represents the weaponized spread of pro-Russia and pro-China information to gain the Western audience's support.[12] Take the United States National Security Strategy as an example. In the section *Information Statecraft*, it states that "America's competitors weaponize information to attack the values and institutions that underpin

---

8   Barrington M. Barrett Jr., "Information Warfare: China's Response to U.S. Technological Advantages," *International Journal of Intelligence and CounterIntelligence* 18, no. 4 (2005): 682-706, 685-686, https://doi.org/10.1080/08850600500177135.

9   Sangkuk Lee, "China's 'Three Warfares': Origins, Applications, and Organizations," *Journal of Strategic Studies* 37, no. 2 (2014): 198-221, 199, https://doi.org/10.1080/01402390.2013.870071.

10 Elsa Kania, "The PLA's Latest Strategic Thinking on the Three Warfares," *China Brief* 16, no. 13 (2016): 13, https://jamestown.org/program/the-plas-latest-strategic-thinking-on-the-three-warfares/.

11 Sascha-Dominik Dov Bachmann, Doowan Lee, and Andrew Dowse, "COVID Information Warfare and the Future of Great Power Competition," *The Fletcher Forum of World Affairs* 44, no. 2 (2020): 11-18, 14, https://www.jstor.org/stable/48599306.

12 Yevgeniy Golovchenko, Mareike Hartmann, and Rebecca Adler-Nissen, "State, Media and Civil Society in the Information Warfare over Ukraine: Citizen Curators of Digital Disinformation," *International Affairs* 94, no. 5 (September 2018): 975-994, 976, https://doi.org/10.1093/ia/iiy148; Joanna Szostek, "What Happens to Public Diplomacy During Information War? Critical Reflections on the Conceptual Framing of International Communication," *International Journal of Communication* 14 (2020): 2728-2748, 2732, https://ijoc.org/index.php/ijoc/article/view/13439/0.

free societies, while shielding themselves from outside information."[13] The publication also explicitly discusses the use of information operations by China and Russia.[14] This reflects the West's specific concern about these two states' abuse of information.

Table 1. Forms of Information Warfare Adopted by Russia and China during the Russia-Ukraine war.

	Forms	Examples
1.	**Being cautious about the wording**	Stating that the "invasion" is a kind of "operation" instead
2.	**Biased coverage of information**	Not covering war damages, civilian death, and Zelenskyy's involvement in the war in detail
3.	**Censorship**	Establishing fake news laws Removing anti-Russian content Great Firewall
4.	**Distortion of responsibilities**	Blaming NATO and the United States for causing the war or humanitarian disasters Accusing Ukraine of causing huge war destruction
5.	**Baseless accusations**	Accusing Ukraine of committing war crimes
6.	**Use of emotionally charged content**	Posting videos of women supporters and surrendering Ukrainian soldiers Calling Ukrainians 'neo-Nazis'
7.	**Fabricated information**	Producing fake evidence of Ukraine soldiers' violent treatment of civilians Exaggerating the surrender number
8.	**Conspiracy theory**	Development of bioweapons in Ukraine
9.	**Potential search engine optimization**	Frequent appearance of Russian state media in top results
10.	**Disguising disinformation as fact-checking**	Debunking a 2017 strike video that is not circulated

---

[13] The White House, *National Security Strategy of the United States of America* (Washington, D.C., The White House, 2017), 35, https://trumpwhitehouse.archives.gov/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/NSS-Final-12-18-2017-0905.pdf.

[14] The White House, *National Security Strategy of the United States of America*.

While the concept of information warfare appears to be mainly used to politicize either side's efforts in spreading information favorable to their camp, their conceptualization actually resonates with each other. The spread of manipulated information aims to distort one's mind to gather support or weaken other countries. We can therefore define information warfare as a combination of measures to manipulate a target audience's thoughts to achieve certain political goals.[15] Thus, as Golovchenko, Hartman, and Adler-Nissen argue, "information is used as a weapon and the minds of citizens are the 'battlefield'."[16]

The Use of Information Warfare for Supporting Russia during the Russia-Ukraine War

In this section, I analyze the use of information warfare to support Russia's aggression during the Russia-Ukraine war (summarized in Table 1). There was already extensive use during Russia's annexation of Crimea in 2014.[17] In 2022, however, the utilization of information warfare is even greater during the full-scale war. China's contributions also amplify the effect of Russia's information warfare in maintaining domestic support and distorting the international audience's perception of the war.

Being Cautious about the Wording

Firstly, Russia and China have been handling the wording in their expressions extremely carefully to avoid triggering unfavorable responses. A significant amount of psychological research has demonstrated the wording effect, which suggests that a slight change in the wording can significantly affect one's preference or perception of an issue.[18] Both Russia and China have made use of this effect to convince the international audience that Russia's military activities are not wars. They have consistently refused to frame Russia's aggressive acts as

15 Fridman, "'Information War' as the Russian Conceptualisation," 45.

16 Golovchenko, Hartmann, and Adler-Nissen, "State, Media and Civil Society in the Information Warfare," 976.

17 Golovchenko, Hartmann, and Adler-Nissen, "State, Media and Civil Society in the Information Warfare;" Quoted in Peter Pomerantsev, "Russia and the Menace of Unreality: How Vladimir Putin Is Revolutionizing Information Warfare," *The Atlantic*, September 9, 2014, https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2014/09/russia-putin-revolutionizing-information-warfare/379880/.

18 Darrin R. Lehman et al., "The Focus of Judgment Effect: A Question Wording Effect Due to Hypothesis Confirmation Bias," *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin* 18, no. 6 (December 1992): 690-699, 690, https://doi.org/10.1177/0146167292186005; Maria Dolores Nieto et al. "Modeling Wording Effects Does Not Help in Recovering Uncontaminated Person Scores: A Systematic Evaluation with Random Intercept Item Factor Analysis," *Frontiers in Psychology* 12, 685326 (2021), https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2021.685326.

wars or invasions, which are negatively loaded terms.[19] Instead, Russia's offensive activities are called operations, such as "a demilitarization operation targeting military infrastructure" or "a special military operation to defend the people's republics."[20] Such sanitization of language could sway public opinion on Moscow's aggression, thus reducing domestic and international resistance to Russia's expansion.

Biased Coverage of Information

Russian and Chinese media have been selectively reporting on the war, so their audiences see the Ukraine crisis through a different lens. Since people collect information on political issues through media sources, selective reporting could shape the audience's perception of the conflict, thus weaponizing information to serve the regime's interests. Russian media understates the scale of Russia's military activities and war destructions.[21] For example, Russian state TV avoids reporting the situation in Kyiv and Kharkiv, where people's houses suffer devastating bombings.[22] Chinese state media also scarcely cover civilian death caused by Russian troops in detail.[23] With such media bias, the information about Russian troops' brutality becomes obscure. The biased portrayal of the war development could influence people to believe that Russia is not a violent aggressor. The audience is therefore tricked into believing in a manipulated story that the two governments want their citizens to consider. As a *New York Times* article

---

[19] Craig Silverman and Jeff Kao, "In the Ukraine Conflict, Fake Fact-Checks Are Being Used to Spread Disinformation," *ProPublica*, March 8, 2022, https://www.propublica.org/article/in-the-ukraine-conflict-fake-fact-checks-are-being-used-to-spread-disinformation; Tara Law, "The World Is Watching Russia Invade Ukraine. But Russian Media Is Telling a Different Story," *Time*, February 28, 2022, https://time.com/6151572/russian-media-ukraine-coverage/; Evelyn Cheng, "China Refuses to Call Russian Attack on Ukraine an 'Invasion,' Deflects Blame to U.S.,"*CNBC*, February 24, 2022, https://www.cnbc.com/2022/02/24/china-refuses-to-call-attack-on-ukraine-an-invasion-blames-us.html.

[20] Simona Kralova and Sandro Vetsko, "Ukraine: Watching the War on Russian TV – a Whole Different Story," *BBC*, March 2, 2022, https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-60571737; Michael M. Grynbaum, John Koblin, and Tiffany Hsu, "Several Western News Organizations Suspend Operations in Russia," *The New York Times*, March 4, 2022, https://www.nytimes.com/2022/03/04/business/western-media-operations-russia.html; "Russia Had 'no Choice' but to Launch 'Special Military Operation' in Ukraine, Lavrov Tells UN," *UN News*, September 24, 2022, https://news.un.org/en/story/2022/09/1127881.

[21] Law, "The World Is Watching Russia Invade Ukraine."

[22] Kralova and Vetsko, "Ukraine: Watching the War on Russian TV."

[23] Rachel Cheung, "Russia-Ukraine War: In Chinese Media, the US Is the Villain," *Aljazeera*, April 6, 2022, https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/4/6/china-media-coverage-ukraine-war.

suggests, Russia has been manipulating the messages Russians receive so they do not believe Russia wages war in Ukraine.[24]

Censorship

The two countries have increased levels of censorship of their media to further control the narrative around major events. As autocratic countries, China and Russia have always tightly controlled the spread of information. Such information control has been strengthened significantly during Russia's large-scale invasion of Ukraine. Notably, building on previous laws like the Russian 2019 Fake News Law and the 2019 Russian Disrespect to Authorities Law, Russia promulgated the Russian 2022 Laws Establishing War Censorship and Prohibiting Anti-War Statements and Calls for Sanctions on March 4, 2022. According to the laws, disseminating "false information" about the exercise by Russia's state bodies could result in fines amounting to five million rubles and imprisonment of up to 15 years.[25] Such harsh penalties could suppress the genuine voices of people or the media. Given the shrinking freedom of speech and the soaring risk of operation in Russia, some Western media companies (e.g., ABC News, CNN International) and Russian independent media (e.g., Radio Echo, Znak.com, Dozhd) have suspended their operations in Russia.[26,27] Moreover, apart from combating anti-government information produced in Russia, the Moscow government also limited Russian citizens' access to foreign media (e.g., BBC and Deutsche Welle) to contain the spread of anti-war materials.[28] As a result, anti-Russia information is hardly circulated in Russia.

Meanwhile, China also launches some milder yet robust censorship measures. State-owned news agencies (e.g., Horizon News) would filter anti-Russia or pro-West content.[29] Chinese media also refuses to translate or broadcast content with anti-Russia messages. One example of the former is the absence of translation for President of the International Paralympic Committee Andrew Parson's

---

[24] Valerie Hopkins, "Ukrainians Find That Relatives in Russia Don't Believe It's a War," *New York Times*, March 6, 2022, https://www.nytimes.com/2022/03/06/world/europe/ukraine-russia-families.html.

[25] The State Duma, "Amendments on liability for fakes about the work of state bodies of the Russian Federation abroad have been adopted," March 22, 2022, http://duma.gov.ru/news/53773/. – in Russian.

[26] Grynbaum, Koblin, and Hsu, "Several Western News Organizations Suspend."

[27] Anna Cooban, "More Russian Media Outlets Close as Moscow Cracks Down," *CNN Business*, March 4, 2022, https://edition.cnn.com/2022/03/04/media/russia-media-crack-down/index.html.

[28] Cooban, "More Russian Media Outlets Close."

[29] Carl Samson, "Chinese News Outlet Accidentally Posts Censorship Instructions on Russia-Ukraine Coverage," *NextShark*, February 24, 2022, https://nextshark.com/chinese-news-russia-ukraine/.

condemnation of Russia at the opening of the 2022 Winter Paralympic Games.[30] An example of the latter occurred with the lack of broadcasting for the English Premier League Matches in which players planned to express their support for Ukraine.[31] It is worth noting that China's Great Firewall continues to act in this critical crisis, which is often neglected in related discussions. China uses the Great Firewall to complement its new censorship measures. People are blocked from accessing foreign websites (e.g., Wikipedia), social media (e.g., Twitter, Facebook), and search engines (e.g., Google).[32] Thus, Chinese citizens can hardly access foreign anti-war information. All these measures result in the circulation of one-sided information within China that encourages the domestic community's tendency to support Russia's invasion.

Distortion of Responsibilities

Despite being the initiator of the war, Russia has consistently shifted the responsibility to Ukraine and the West with China's assistance. Putin has insisted that the "special military operation" is a forced measure.[33] The Moscow Government and Chinese state media leveraged the "Blame NATO" argument, developed by political scientists like John Mearsheimer,[34] to blame NATO and the United States for failing to satisfy Russia's demand for security and thus forcing Russia to attack Ukraine.[35] China's Foreign Ministry even accused the United States of

---

[30] Weilun Soon, "Chinese Translators Offered a Watered-down Version of the Paralympic Committee President's Anti-war Speech during the Games' Opening Ceremony," *Business Insiders*, March 7, 2022, https://www.businessinsider.com/chinese-state-tv-avoids-anti-war-views-paralympics-opening-speech-2022-3.

[31] Beiyi Seow, "Chinese Media Echoes Russia on Ukraine War," *The Moscow Times*, March 14, 2022, https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2022/03/14/chinese-media-echoes-russia-on-ukraine-war-a76913.

[32] Anne-Marie Brady, "Plus ça change?: Media Control Under Xi Jinping," *Problems of Post-Communism* 64, no. 3-4 (2017): 128-140, 133, https://doi.org/10.1080/107582 16.2016.1197779.

[33] Law, "The World Is Watching Russia Invade Ukraine."

[34] See John J. Mearsheimer, "Why the Ukraine Crisis Is the West's Fault: The Liberal Delusions that Provoked Putin," *Foreign Affairs* 93, no. 5 (September/October 2014): 1-12, https://www.mearsheimer.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/Why-the-Ukraine-Crisis-Is.pdf.

[35] Katherine Fung, "White House Rejects Putin Blaming NATO for Ukraine War: That's 'Absurd'," *Newsweek*, May 9, 2022, https://www.newsweek.com/white-house-rejects-putin-blaming-nato-ukraine-war-thats-absurd-1704990; Martin Fornusek, "Russian Propaganda in War: Fake 'Fact-checkers,' Far-right Conspiracies, and Distracted Progressives," *Euromaidan Press*, May 20, 2022, https://euromaidan press.com/2022/05/20/russian-propaganda-adapts-to-the-war/; Sheng Jun, "Fanning up Flames of Trouble, US Is to Blame for Tension in Ukraine," *China Military Online*, March 17, 2022, http://eng.chinamil.com.cn/view/2022-03/17/content_101414 90.htm; Vibhuti Sanchala. "China Urges US to Take Responsibility for Ukraine War; Slams Sanctions on Russia," *Republic World*, April 11, 2022, https://www.republic

being "the real trouble-maker and threat to security in the world,"[36] which is supported by fierce criticisms against the United States by media agencies like China Military Online and People's Daily.[37] China's state-led media *Global Times* even created the hashtag #UkraineCrisisInstigator to blame the United States and NATO.[38] It also published a series of stories and cartoons (e.g., Figure 1) to show how the United States is bringing trouble to the world[39] and distract the audience from the Russia-Ukraine war by discussing how the United States created humanitarian disasters and bloody turbulence in previous wars like Iraq, Syria, and Afghanistan.[40] These could redirect the audience to ignore Russia's responsibility for causing the war while undermining the West's credibility and thus discouraging participation in the West's anti-Russian call.

Figure 1: A Cartoon Published in the Global Times Blaming the United States for Causing the War. (Source: Global Times, https://www.globaltimes.cn/page/202203/1256665.shtml)

---

world.com/world-news/russia-ukraine-crisis/china-urges-us-to-take-responsibility-for-ukraine-war-slams-sanctions-on-russia-articleshow.html.

[36] Jun, "Fanning up Flames of Trouble"; Sheng Zhong, "U.S. Has Inescapable Responsibilities for Ukraine Crisis," *People's Daily*, March 30, 2022, http://en.people.cn/n3/2022/0330/c90000-10077602.html.

[37] Jun, "Fanning up Flames of Trouble."

[38] Cheung, "Russia-Ukraine War: In Chinese Media."

[39] Hao Zhang, "Ukraine Crisis Instigator: US-led NATO Reneges on 'Not One Inch Eastward' Promise to Compress Russia's Space to the Extreme," *Global Times*, March 23, 2022, https://www.globaltimes.cn/page/202203/1256665.shtml.

[40] Zhun Li, "Human Rights Destroyer: US Causes Humanitarian Disasters around Globe, Killing Innocent Civilians and Creating Millions of Refugees," *Global Times*, April 13, 2022, https://www.globaltimes.cn/page/202204/1259260.shtml.

Meanwhile, apart from criticizing the United States and NATO, Russian TV also accused Ukraine of being responsible for the strikes in the Donbas region of Ukraine to shift the responsibility for the severe damages to infrastructure, housing, and other facilities.[41] This could deter citizens in other states from developing sympathy towards Ukraine, thus favoring Russia's expansion.

Baseless Accusations

Russia has accused Ukraine of harming civilians or threatening Russia without justification. Russia asserts that Ukraine is committing genocide against Russian-speaking people in the eastern territory of Ukraine.[42] Moreover, Russia's state-controlled Channel One has spread claims that Ukrainian troops were bombing residential buildings and warehouses with ammonia, despite lacking evidence.[43] It also alleges that Ukraine is using more than 4.5 million civilians as human shields, thus committing war crimes.[44] For instance, the chief spokesman for the Russian Ministry of Defence, Igor Konashenkov, stated that "[T]he Kyiv regime uses the residents of the city as a 'human shield' for the nationalists who have deployed artillery units and military equipment in residential areas of the capital."[45] This, again, is intended to help Russia shift the responsibility for causing the war to its enemy and reduce resistance to its invasion.

Use of Emotionally Charged Content

Russia and China have produced emotionally charged content to derogate Ukraine and the West or defend Russia's reputation. Emotionally charged materials can prompt the audience to accept and spread ideas without carefully considering or examining evidence.[46] On the one hand, Russia and China have circulated pro-Russia military activities materials (e.g., clips of women supporting

---

[41] Kralova and Vetsko, "Ukraine: Watching the War on Russian TV."

[42] Jessica Brandt and Valerie Wirtschafter, "The Surprising Performance of Kremlin Propaganda on Google News," *Brookings*, March 1, 2022, https://www.brookings.edu/techstream/the-surprising-performance-of-kremlin-propaganda-on-google-news/.

[43] Kralova and Vetsko, "Ukraine: Watching the War on Russian TV."

[44] Kralova and Vetsko, "Ukraine: Watching the War on Russian TV;" Neve Gordon and Nicola Perugini, "Why We Need to Challenge Russia's Human Shields Narrative," *Aljazeera*, April 3, 2022, https://www.aljazeera.com/opinions/2022/4/3/why-we-need-to-challenge-russias-human-shields-narrative; Anurag Roushan, "Russia-Ukraine War: Moscow Accuses Ukraine Govt of Using Civilians as 'human Shields'," *Republic World*, February 25, 2022, https://www.republicworld.com/world-news/russia-ukraine-crisis/russia-ukraine-war-moscow-accuses-ukraine-govt-of-using-civilians-as-human-shields-articleshow.html.

[45] Quoted in Gordon and Perugini, "Why We Need to Challenge Russia's Human Shields Narrative."

[46] Shamsiah Abd Kadier, Anitawati Mohd Lokman, and Toshio Tsuchiya, "Emotion and Techniques of Propaganda in YouTube Videos," *Indian Journal of Science Technology* 9, no. 1 (2016): 1-8, 3, https://dx.doi.org/10.17485/ijst/2016/v9iS1/106841.

Russian soldiers [47] and clips of surrendered Ukraine soldiers [48]) to boost Russians' morale and consolidate the consensus on Russia's military activities. In addition, the sense of competence promoted by the materials could help Russia arouse national sentiment and avoid domestic resistance. On the other hand, Russia has been producing emotionally appealing content to change the perception of Ukraine, where people may believe their government is full of Nazis. Towards that aim, officials and media refer to Ukraine as a neo-Nazi force and compare Russia's invasion of Ukraine to the Soviet Union's defense of its homeland from Nazi aggression.[49] Such content can vilify the current administration and stir fear among Russian citizens or racial groups that Nazi Germany has threatened, thus persuading these people to support Russia's "de-Nazification" military activities as a liberation.

Fabricated Information

Russia has fabricated information about the war to shatter Ukraine's image and morale. While some aforementioned accusations lack evidence, Russia has attempted to produce evidence to justify its claims. For example, Russia planned to produce a video in which Ukrainian soldiers treat civilians violently to jeopardize Ukraine's reputation on the international stage.[50] This has altered the truth and deceived individuals, consolidating and expanding Russia's support base. Additionally, Russia has fabricated materials targeting Russian and Ukrainian audiences to distort the war development. Russia's state-owned news agency RIA News has denied that Russian aircraft, helicopters, and armored vehicles were lost,[51] which contradicts international reports.[52] Russia also spread false claims that Ukraine's military personnel were leaving their positions, contradicting the Ukrainian officials' firm refusal to surrender or escape.[53] Moreover, Russia has been exaggerating the number of surrendered Ukrainian soldiers.[54] These efforts could undermine Ukraine's and boost its own troops' morale, thus increasing the likelihood of winning the war. By creating an image that Russia has the upper hand in the war and the Ukrainian militaries are cowardly, the

---

[47] Dmitry Adamsky, "Russia Botched Its Early War Propaganda Campaign, but Now It's Doubling Down," *Foreign Policy*, April 30, 2022, https://foreignpolicy.com/2022/04/30/russia-putin-zampolits-ukraine-propaganda-campaign-war/.

[48] Global Times (@globaltimesnews), "Surrendering Ukraine soldiers were given cigarettes in a video clip distributed by Russian media on Friday," *Twitter*, February 26, 2022, https://twitter.com/globaltimesnews/status/1497357644432277505.

[49] Kralova and Vetsko, "Ukraine: Watching the War on Russian TV;" Fornusek, "Russian Propaganda in War."

[50] Brandt and Wirtschafter, "The Surprising Performance of Kremlin Propaganda."

[51] Andrey Kots, "'Call Everyone': What Is Happening in the Donbass," *RIA News*, February 24, 2022, https://ria.ru/20220224/donbass-1774718537.html.

[52] Law, "The World Is Watching Russia Invade Ukraine."

[53] Law, "The World Is Watching Russia Invade Ukraine."

[54] Brandt and Wirtschafter, "The Surprising Performance of Kremlin Propaganda."

fabricated materials could weaken Ukrainian support for its government and encourage Russians to support Moscow's "special military operation."

Conspiracy Theory

Russia and China have been spreading conspiracy theories to encourage the audience to support Russia's invasion. Conspiracy theories refer to unverified allegations that some hidden or powerful agents carry out secret plots to cause some political or social events to happen.[55] Psychological studies have suggested that when people lack trust in others or feel insecure, they tend to believe in conspiracy theories.[56] Distrust towards the West has risen in countries like China, Iran, and Turkey.[57] This has provided favorable conditions for the spread of conspiracy theories. Russian government and media have been spreading messages that Ukraine has built up bioweapon-manufacturing laboratories with the United States' financial assistance.[58] Such claims are further disseminated by Chinese media virally.[59] The head of the Russian space agency Roscosmos also wrote that Ukraine had developed a bioweapon that could hinder the reproductive capability or immunity of Russians, thus making them vulnerable to extinction.[60] This

---

[55] Robert Brotherton and Christopher C. French, "Belief in Conspiracy Theories and Susceptibility to the Conjunction Fallacy," *Applied Cognitive Psychology* 28, no. 2 (March/April 2014): 238-248, 238, https://doi.org/10.1002/acp.2995; Silvia Mari et al., "Conspiracy Theories and Institutional Trust: Examining the Role of Uncertainty Avoidance and Active Social Media Use," *Political Psychology* 43, no. 2 (April 2021): 277-296, 279, https://doi.org/10.1111/pops.12754.

[56] Ted Goertzel, "Belief in Conspiracy Theories," *Political Psychology* 15, no. 4 (1994): 731-742, 739-740, https://doi.org/10.2307/3791630; Jan-Willem van Prooijen, Giuliana Spadaro, and Haiyan Wang, "Suspicion of Institutions: How Distrust and Conspiracy Theories Deteriorate Social Relationships," *Current Opinion in Psychology* 43, no. 1 (February 2022): 65-69, 66, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.copsyc.2021.06.013; Mari et al., "Conspiracy Theories and Institutional Trust," 280.

[57] Kishore Mahbubani, *The Asian 21st Century* (Singapore: Springer, 2022), 64; Oğuzhan Göksel, "Defying the System: The Origins of Anti-Westernism in the Non-Western World and the Case of Iran," *Turkish Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 6, no. 2 (2019): 13-42, 4-5, https://doi.org/10.26513/tocd.581276.

[58] Justin Ling, "False Claims of U.S. Biowarfare Labs in Ukraine Grip QAnon," *Foreign Policy*, March 2, 2022, https://foreignpolicy.com/2022/03/02/ukraine-biolabs-conspiracy-theory-qanon/; Fornusek, "Russian Propaganda in War;" *Euronews*, "Russia Demands U.S. Explain Biological Programme in Ukraine," March 10, 2022, https://www.euronews.com/2022/03/10/us-ukraine-crisis-russia-usa-biological.

[59] Cheung, "Russia-Ukraine War: In Chinese Media;" Simone McCarthy, "China's Promotion of Russian Disinformation Indicates Where Its Loyalties Lie," *CNN*, March 10, 2022, https://edition.cnn.com/2022/03/10/china/china-russia-disinformation-campaign-ukraine-intl-dst-hnk/index.html.
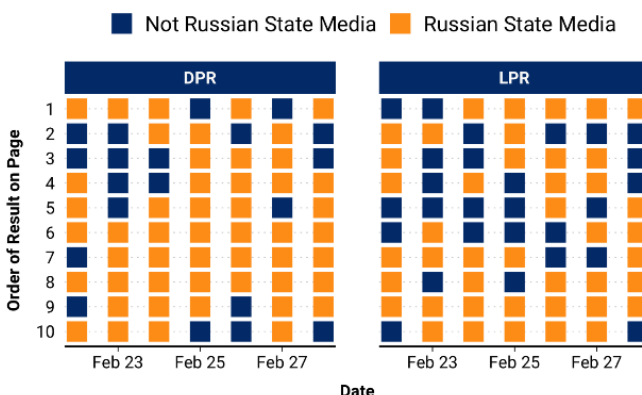
[60] John Varga, "Putin Accuses US of Attempting to Wipe Russians off Face of Planet with New 'Sex Bomb'," *Express*, March 21, 2022, https://www.express.co.uk/news/world/1584059/russia-news-ukraine-war-us-bioweapons-targeting-reproduction-rogozin-vladimir-putin.

could further stir controversies and breed hostility of their domestic audience and non-Western audiences against the West.

Potential Search Engine Optimization

Russia may have practiced search engine optimization (SEO) to accelerate the spread of the pro-Russia narrative. SEO is the practice of improving the search ranking of the materials, such as by mentioning specific trending keywords.[61] For some search items (e.g., DPR and LPR), Russian state media appear more frequently in the top search results.[62] While it remains unclear whether it is caused by Russia's deliberate manipulation of its content to fit the algorithms or coincidentally caused by the mass production of content, this issue warns us that SEO could significantly affect the results of people's search for information. Seeing only the Russian sources may distort their views and perspectives in line with state-sponsored fabrication.

Figure 2: The Top Search Results on Google News for Two Key Items Related to the War (Source: Brookings, https://www.brookings.edu/techstream/the-surprising-performance-of-kremlin-propaganda-on-google-news/).

---

[61] Mary Cushman, "Search Engine Optimization: What Is It and Why Should We Care?" *Research and Practice in Thrombosis and Haemostasis* 2, no. 2 (2018): 180, https://doi.org/10.1002/rth2.12098; Ravneet Singh Bhandari and Ajay Bansal, "Impact of Search Engine Optimization as a Marketing Tool," *Jindal Journal of Business Research* 7, no. 1 (June 2018): 23, https://doi.org/10.1177/2278682117754016.

[62] Brandt and Wirtschafter, "The Surprising Performance of Kremlin Propaganda."

Disguising Disinformation as Fact-checking

Lastly, Russia has introduced a new tactic that has never been seen in other conflicts: disguising disinformation as fact-checking. Traditionally, fact-checking has been regarded as an effective way to combat fake information. Nonetheless, Russia has used the rubric of "fact-checking" to circulate more fake claims by using fake stories to refute another fake story. For example, pro-Russian forces claimed that Ukrainians were circulating a video of a strike to accuse Russia of bombing Kharkiv. Another "fact-checking" video is then posted to explain that the strike video was actually a video shot in 2017 and the Ukrainians were spreading lies. Nonetheless, there is no evidence proving that the Ukrainian government circulated the strike video.[63] After examining the metadata of the videos, Darren Linvill argues that such debunking videos are created by the person who made the fake strike video.[64] Meanwhile, other "fake" and corresponding "fact-checking" videos were also presented by state-controlled channels.[65] This new tactic has made information more confusing while tricking some audiences into believing that Russia spreads correct information and Ukraine is the liar, thus helping the Moscow government gain support.

Summary

In essence, Russia has been actively involved in information warfare during the Russia-Ukraine War, while China has also played a supporting role in assisting its partner's invasion. The variance, extensiveness, and scale of Russia's battlespace use of people's cognitive abilities and understanding have been unprecedentedly large. Old tactics have been refined, and new tactics have also been developed (Table 1), thus enhancing the effectiveness of manipulating information as strategic tools in building domestic and international support.

The Implication of Information Warfare

With rich resources, the state authority is capable of producing, manipulating, and circulating content to promote certain positions and views.[66] Meanwhile, due to the abundance of information, people often experience information overload, which refers to being overwhelmed by an excessive amount of information.[67] They lack the capacity and time to process all information, so they

---

[63] Fornusek, "Russian Propaganda in War;" Silverman and Kao, "In the Ukraine Conflict, Fake Fact-Checks Are Being Used."

[64] Silverman and Kao, "In the Ukraine Conflict, Fake Fact-Checks Are Being Used."

[65] Kralova and Vetsko, "Ukraine: Watching the War on Russian TV."

[66] Golovchenko, Hartmann, and Adler-Nissen, "State, Media and Civil Society in the Information Warfare," 981; Larry M. Wortzel, *The Chinese People's Liberation Army and Information Warfare* (Carlisle, PA: The United States Army War College Press, 2014), 31, https://press.armywarcollege.edu/monographs/506/.

[67] Hyehyun Hong and Hyo Jung Kim, "Antecedents and Consequences of Information Overload in the COVID-19 Pandemic," *International Journal of Environmental Research*

need to seek shortcuts to consume information.[68] Manipulated information is an attractive shortcut because it is brainwashing, invasive, or emotionally appealing.[69] However, such information is deliberately distorted, and the audience may not notice that. Therefore, information warfare can prompt people to believe and behave in a way aligned with the initiator's political goals.[70] The weaponization of information and people's cognitive understanding could, therefore, significantly affect the supporting base for the aggressor. The strong domestic support for Russia's invasion and the surprising sympathy towards Russia should thus be attributed to the factor that Russia and China have been disseminating manipulated information. Such information warfare has helped counteract pro-Ukraine information influence, thus helping Russia to reduce resistance.

Domestically speaking, according to a poll conducted in Russia by the Levada Center, 77% of respondents support Russian military actions in Ukraine in May 2022 (Table 2).[71] Regarding China, a significant number of posts were cheering for Russia's "anti-Western" war.[72] It is true that in autocratic countries like Russia and China, the credibility of media and polling is questionable because there is censorship or falsification of the preferences.[73] People are often unwilling to criticize the government.[74] Therefore, the support for Russian military actions is

---

and Public Health 17, no. 24, 9305 (2020): 1, https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph17249305; Peter Gordon Roetzel, "Information Overload in the Information Age: A Review of the Literature from Business Administration, Business Psychology, and Related Disciplines with a Bibliometric Approach and Framework Development," *Business Research* 12, no. 1 (2019): 479-522, 480, https://doi.org/10.1007/s40685-018-0069-z.

68 Meghan Fitzpatrick, Ritu Gill, and Jennifer F. Giles, "Information Warfare: Lessons in Inoculation to Disinformation," *Parameters* 52, no. 1 (2022): 105-118, 108, https://doi.org/10.55540/0031-1723.3132; Rune Karlsen and Toril Aalberg, "Social Media and Trust in News: An Experimental Study of the Effect of Facebook on News Story Credibility," *Digital Journalism* (2021): 4, https://doi.org/10.1080/21670811.2021.1945938.

69 Edward K. Strong Jr., "Control of Propaganda as a Psychological Problem," The *Scientific Monthly* 14, no. 3 (March 1922): 234-252, 240, https://www.jstor.org/stable/6376.

70 Szostek, "What Happens to Public Diplomacy During Information War?" 2730.

71 Levada, "Conflict with Ukraine," Press Release, June 2, 2022, https://www.levada.ru/2022/06/02/konflikt-s-ukrainoj-2/. – in Russian.

72 Yuan Li, "Why the Chinese Internet Is Cheering Russia's Invasion," *The New York Times*, February 27, 2022, https://www.nytimes.com/2022/02/27/business/china-russia-ukraine-invasion.html.

73 Eda Keremoğlu and Nils B. Weidmann, "How Dictators Control the Internet: A Review Essay," *Comparative Political Studies* 53, no. 10-11 (September 2020): 1690-91, https://doi.org/10.1177/0010414020912278; Charles Crabtree, Holger L Kern, and David A Siegel, "Cults of Personality, Preference Falsification, and the Dictator's Dilemma," *Journal of Theoretical Politics* 32, no. 3 (July 2020): 414, https://doi.org/10.1177/0951629820927790.

74 Edmund Malesky and Paul Schuler, "The Single-Party Dictator's Dilemma: Information in Elections without Opposition," *Legislative Studies Quarterly* 36, no. 4 (2011): 491-530, 492, http://www.jstor.org/stable/23053275.

likely overstated. Nonetheless, the poll has been conducted by the only remaining independent pollster in Russia, which is a more trustworthy or legitimate source.[75] Some pro-Russian and anti-Western posts are also created or shared by China's domestic audience rather than by the state media, which implies a certain level of national support for Russia. One could not ignore the large domestic supporting base of Russia's invasion and the widespread distortion of public opinion. Information warfare clearly plays a role in gathering domestic support for Russian aggression.

Table 2. Domestic Support for Russian Military Actions in Ukraine.

Category	March 22	April 22	May 22
Definitely support	53%	45%	47%
Rather support	28%	29%	30%
Do not support	14%	19%	17%
Difficult to answer	6%	7%	6%

Source: Levada, "Conflict with Ukraine," June 2022.

Internationally speaking, while the Western powers are furious at Russia's unlawful invasions, a number of countries unexpectedly refuse to join the Anti-Russian call. Thirty-five countries like India and South Africa have abstained in the UN vote on the resolution condemning Russia's invasion.[76] Some citizens of African countries even considered Putin their hero who is brave in confronting Western hegemony.[77] Admittedly, other factors (e.g., discontent with the West's past military activities, hypocritical embracement of Ukraine, biased treatment of non-Western countries) could affect various countries' attitudes towards the West's anti-Russian call.[78] However, information warfare can complement other factors to further intensify people's distrust or hostility toward the West, thus

[75] Peter Dickinson, "More Than Three-quarters of Russians Still Support Putin's Ukraine War," *Atlantic Council*, June 6, 2022, https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/ukrainealert/more-than-three-quarters-of-russians-still-support-putins-ukraine-war/.

[76] Amitav Acharya, "Global South Reacts to Western Call for Unity against Russia," *Responsible Statecraft*, March 29, 2022, https://responsiblestatecraft.org/2022/03/29/global-south-reacts-to-western-call-for-unity-against-russia/.

[77] Khatondi Soita Wepukhulu, "An African View of What's Happening in Europe," *openDemocracy*, March 3, 2022, https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/5050/an-african-view-of-whats-happening-in-europe/.

[78] Joseph Krauss, "Many in Mideast See Hypocrisy in Western Embrace of Ukraine," *The Associated Press*, March 29, 2022, https://apnews.com/article/russia-ukraine-islamic-state-group-jerusalem-migration-europe-1ce41cc04aed6afc415e6ed83f83c984; Aude Darnal et al., "The Global South on Ukraine," *Inkstick*, May 25, 2022, https://inkstickmedia.com/the-global-south-on-ukraine/; Acharya, "Global South Reacts to Western Call."

prompting them to stay away from the West or even align with Russia. Therefore, apart from reducing the legitimacy of the anti-Russian initiative and showing a weakness of the West in leading the anti-Russian chorus, the non-negligible support or sympathy towards Russia also implies that the spread of state-sponsored biased information can strongly influence people's attitude towards a political issue.

Meanwhile, we also need to acknowledge the important implication of information warfare on future wars. Thanks to the development of satellites, the internet, and other digital technologies, the spread of information, including propaganda and disinformation, will become faster and less costly. As a result, both domestic and international audiences will have greater exposure to such manipulated information.[79] Therefore, information warfare will become increasingly effective, as demonstrated by the Russia-Ukraine War.

Admittedly, social media platforms are now collaborating with independent fact-checkers to label false and misleading content, which could make the dissemination of manipulated information difficult. Nonetheless, the current algorithms and human moderation are far less than perfect. If there is an influx of diverse manipulated information, it is costly to remove all the content, not to mention whether this could constitute a violation of freedom of speech.[80] The threat of information warfare will therefore remain despite the development of fact-checking mechanisms.

The use of information warfare will persist and people's cognitive understanding is at risk of foreign intervention or distortion. The term fact-checking may end up being a tool for politicians to debunk false information to make other false information more persuasive, so people will find difficulties in finding reliable sources of information. Truth, therefore, becomes even more difficult to be identified. More people will be tricked into believing manipulated information, which means their perceptions can be shaped by malicious material to become an aggressor's supporter. Wars no longer solely take place on a physical battlefield with guns and missiles, but people's minds will become a more important arena.

What Should We Do? More Education Is Needed

While the rise of information warfare is an uncomfortable truth to truth-seekers like us, we must stand against the malicious manipulation of information to defend the independence of our minds. The same applies to the government because citizens' inability to distinguish truth can seriously threaten security and

---

79 Szostek, "What Happens to Public Diplomacy During Information War?" 2733.

80 Kelley Cotter, Julia R. DeCook, and Shaheen Kanthawala, "Fact-Checking the Crisis: COVID-19, Infodemics, and the Platformization of Truth," *Social Media + Society* 8, no. 1 (January 2022): 3, https://doi.org/10.1177/20563051211069048.

ruling stability.[81] Thus, more education on analyzing information is needed to help people maintain their rationality.

According to Zara Abrams, cyber citizenship (also commonly referred to as digital citizenship), which refers to the combination of digital literacy, responsible behavior, and awareness of the threat of online manipulation, could effectively help individuals tackle information warfare.[82] This combination provides a holistic framework for individuals to learn to deal with manipulated information and for the government to implement counter-information warfare education.

Individuals

It should be acknowledged that the characteristics of digital citizens largely resemble those of ordinary citizens. Digital citizens have their corresponding rights and responsibilities in the virtual community as citizens in the physical community.[83] Critical thinking, in particular, is an element of a good digital citizen that deserves our attention.

Individuals must recognize that they are targets in information warfare. With the increasing trend of using information warfare, all citizens should be aware of the possibility of coming across manipulated information on media platforms. It is, therefore, of utmost importance for individuals to enhance their digital literacy. While digital literacy has been a contested concept, it can be summarized as the skills, knowledge, and competence of assimilating, evaluating, and reintegrating information properly and meaningfully.[84] It helps individuals exercise critical thinking and enhance their resilience against information warfare.

---

[81] European Commission, "Tackling Online Disinformation: A European Approach," (COM(2018) 236 final) (Brussels: European Commission, 2018), 2-3, https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:52018DC0236.

[82] Zara Abrams, "The Role of Psychological Warfare in the Battle for Ukraine," *Monitor on Psychology* 53, no. 4 (2022): 18, https://www.apa.org/monitor/2022/06/news-psychological-warfare.

[83] Gülcan Öztürk, "Digital Citizenship and Its Teaching: A Literature Review," *Journal of Educational Technology & Online Learning* 4, no. 1 (2021): 31-45, 32, http://doi.org/ In particular 10.31681/jetol.857904.

[84] Carolyn R. Pool, "A New Digital Literacy: A Conversation with Paul Gilster," *Education Leadership* 55, no. 3 (1997): 6-11, 9, https://www.learntechlib.org/p/83481/; Luci Pangrazio and Julian Sefton-Green, "Digital Rights, Digital Citizenship and Digital Literacy: What's the Difference?" *Journal of New Approaches in Educational Research* 10, no. 1 (2022): 15-27, 21, https://doi.org/10.7821/naer.2021.1.616; Luci Pangrazio, Anna-Lena Godhe, and Alejo González López Ledesma, "What Is Digital Literacy? A Comparative Review of Publications across Three Language Contexts," *E-Learning and Digital Media* 17, no. 6 (2020): 443, https://doi.org/10.1177/2042753020946291; Danhua Peng and Zhonggen Yu, "A Literature Review of Digital Literacy over Two Decades," *Education Research International* 2022, no. 1 (2022): 2, https://doi.org/10.1155/2022/2533413; Paul Gilster, *Digital Literacy* (New York: Wiley Computer Pub., 1997), 1; Catherine Audrin and Bertrand Audrin, "Key Factors in Digital Literacy in Learning and Education: A Systematic Literature Review Using Text Mining," *Education and Information Technologies* 27 (2022): 7395-7419, https://doi.org/10.1007/s10639-021-10832-5.

First, individuals have to identify the sources of information. Some media and intermediaries tend to show bias or be weaponized by the state to distort the audience's mind. Examples include state-owned media, individuals or media affiliated with political parties or certain political stances, and sources from autocratic countries with censorship, such as Global Times and People's Daily in China, as mentioned. This implies that the sources themselves reflect their stance on certain issues, which impacts their credibility. Individuals should therefore check the sources' political and ideological affiliations before fully trusting the information. They should also strive to collect accurate and objective information from more independent and trustworthy sources, which undergo a rigorous report process, provide up-to-date references, and offer balanced perspectives. It is also possible that biased media and intermediaries could cite 'credible' sources out of context to gain higher credibility, so individuals should check not only the sources but the citations as well.

Second, individuals have to identify emotive and propaganda elements. It is common for information warfare to adopt offensive or emotive language to stimulate readers' interest and affect their rationality. For example, China has been using negative words like "vampires," "brutality," and "hegemony" to describe the United States during the Russia-Ukraine war so as to cultivate an anti-American sentiment.[85] Therefore, people must stay calm when they read emotive content so that they can rationally analyze information and avoid being weaponized by aggressors.

Third, individuals should develop the habit of checking multiple sources. As mentioned, some information channels selectively report facts, convey bias, or spread fake news, so individuals cannot rely on one single source to grasp the full picture of the issue. Besides helping individuals gain a deeper and broader understanding of the issue, going through more sources also allows individuals to check whether some claims are false or really exist. Thus, they can verify whether debunking videos are debunking existing or artificially created false information, and so rendering this new tactic less effective.

By developing digital citizenship and enhancing their digital literacy, individuals can critically analyze information from different layers of sources (Figure 3). Individuals could then identify whether the sender, intermediary platforms, and media are intrinsically biased, thus evaluating the source's trustworthiness and message. They could also gain the capability of evaluating the credibility of different messages by comparing them with a wide range of sources or with rational analysis. This helps to avoid traps of manipulated information that penetrates these layers. This could significantly reduce information warfare's effectiveness in exploiting one's cognitive and decision-making capability.

---

[85] Li, "Human Rights Destroyer."
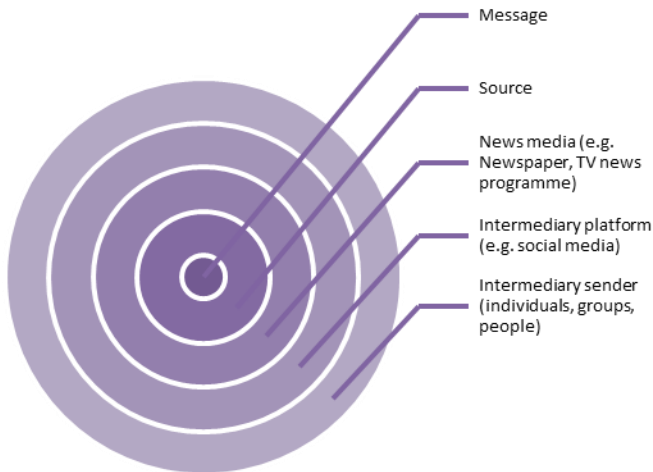
Figure 3: Five Layers of Information Channels (Source: Karlsen & Aalberg, "Social Media and Trust in News," adapted by the author)**.**

Moreover, the possibility of coming across manipulated information also means that other netizens can be weaponized by receiving or disseminating manipulated information. Thus, posting, commenting, and spreading content can have political implications: Individuals' acts in the virtual community can unknowingly assist the aggressor in circulating manipulated information, thus facilitating its aggression.[86] Therefore, individuals should be responsible for their actions in the virtual community. They should think before posting and sharing content. Everyone's wholehearted contributions are vital to preventing the circulation of manipulated information.

The Government

Individuals may not recognize the danger posed by information warfare as manipulated information unconsciously affects one's mind. Therefore, the government needs to take an active role in promoting digital citizenship education so its citizens can be resilient against information warfare. This could, in turn, encourage citizens to take up individual efforts such as those discussed above to improve their digital literacy and critical thinking skills. The government can intervene in two main ways to avoid public defeat in information warfare.

The government has to develop a comprehensive curriculum for educating people on the importance and skills of tackling information warfare. While some

---

[86] European Commission, "Tackling Online Disinformation," 7.

countries have developed education for training students' analytical and evaluation skills, some (e.g., the United Kingdom) failed to refine the curriculum to adapt to the rapid changes in the digital environment.[87] Also, some digital citizenship projects (e.g., the Digital Drivers' License project in the United States) are limited to certain age groups, thus ignoring other students and/or adults who are equally or more vulnerable to manipulated content.[88] Given the growing use of information warfare, the inadequacies of current curricula are becoming more obvious. Policymakers should therefore devote more resources to promoting digital citizenship. The curriculum has to include more content to help students identify fake news, disinformation, biased information, and other common elements of information warfare, as well as encourage criticality. Formative and summative assessments (e.g., tests, conversations) are also necessary to help students fully understand their knowledge and skills and assess teaching effectiveness.[89]

Meanwhile, teachers and schools may lack the relevant knowledge or resources to implement such curricula and assessments. As a principal stakeholder in the learning ecosystem, the government has to organize training, provide guidelines, or produce learning resources (e.g., handouts, worksheets, teaching plans, and presentations) to facilitate teaching and learning.[90] These are essential for the school to teach digital citizenship and literacy effectively.[91] If possible, the government can leverage the power of other stakeholders like think tanks and non-governmental organizations to fill in the resource gap and develop supporting measures. The institutionalization of such education could help nurture

---

[87] Gianfranco Polizzi and Ros Taylor, "Misinformation, Digital Literacy and the School Curriculum," Media Policy Brief 22 (London: Media Policy Project, London School of Economics and Political Science, 2019), 12, https://eprints.lse.ac.uk/101083/6/Misinformation_digital_literacy_and_the_school_curriculum_updated_Sept_2019_.pdf.

[88] International Society for Technology in Education, "Digital Citizenship Defined: Teach the 9 Elements to Enhance Students' Safety, Creativity and Empathy," 20, http://oped.educacion.uc.cl/website/images/sitio/formacion/estudios/marcos/ciudadania%20digital/ISTE_2018_Digital_Citizenship_Defined_Teach_9_elements.pdf.

[89] Gavin T.L. Brown, "Is Assessment for Learning Really Assessment?" *Frontiers in Education* 4, no. 1, Article 64 (June 2019): 3, https://doi.org/10.3389/feduc.2019.00064; Lorrie A. Shepard, "The Role of Assessment in a Learning Culture," *Educational Researcher* 29, no. 7 (2000): 4-14, 13, https://doi.org/10.2307/1176145; Hanna B. Westbroek et al., "A Practical Approach to Assessment for Learning and Differentiated Instruction," *International Journal of Science Education* 42, no. 6 (2020): 955-976, 956, https://doi.org/10.1080/09500693.2020.1744044; Stephen Newstead, "The Purposes of Assessment," *Psychology Learning & Teaching* 3, no. 2 (September 2004): 97-101, 97-98, https://doi.org/10.2304/plat.2003.3.2.97.

[90] Polizzi and Taylor, "Misinformation, Digital Literacy and the School Curriculum," 13.

[91] National Literacy Trust, "Fake News and Critical Literacy: The Final Report of the Commission on Fake News and the Teaching of Critical Literacy in Schools" (London: National Literacy Trust, 2018), 23, https://literacytrust.org.uk/research-services/research-reports/fake-news-and-critical-literacy-final-report/.

our future generations into responsible and digitally literate citizens who can confidently survive in the turbulent digital era.

Furthermore, the government has to launch media promotions to complement school education. While school education promotes digital citizenship immersively, the non-student public could not receive such valuable lessons. Mass media and social media promotion with high public coverage are thus needed to raise public awareness of information warfare effectively. These promotions can help improve people's understanding of social issues, mobilize support, and remind them to protect themselves against certain threats.[92] In this case, advertisements and promotional videos can be produced to provide timely and rich information about information warfare. This helps the public understand the risk posed by information warfare, thus encouraging public engagement in developing digital citizenship. With the use of multiple channels, the government can effectively help its citizens think, analyze, and evaluate critically, thus strengthening their immunity to manipulated content.

It must be emphasized that such education projects should be long-term with constant evaluations and adjustments because of the fast-changing nature of media.[93] As Gianfranco Polizzi and Ros Taylor point out, "Misinformation is not new. But in the digital age, misinformation has acquired new forms and new means to spread rapidly."[94] The Russia-Ukraine War has already reflected that new information warfare strategies are being developed. In the future, with the growing attention on this new warfare, more creative and effective strategies will be persistently introduced. The government must review its education projects frequently to adapt to the new context. Quantitative and qualitative research can be conducted regularly to evaluate whether students are digitally literate and whether more supporting resources are needed. It also needs to reference other countries' examples to improve its education. In this way, the whole country can become more capable of defending itself from malicious manipulation of information.

Summary

The success of strategies for combating information warfare depends on the contributions from multiple parties, as synthesized in Figure 4. The importance

---

[92] Zhenya Tang et al., "Does Government Social Media Promote Users' Information Security Behavior towards COVID-19 Scams? Cultivation Effects and Protective Motivations," *Government Information Quarterly* 38, no. 2, 101572 (April 2021): 2, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.giq.2021.101572; Douglas Yeung, "Social Media as a Catalyst for Policy Action and Social Change for Health and Well-Being: Viewpoint," *Journal of Medical Internet Research* 20, no. 3, e94 (2018): 3, https://doi.org/10.2196/jmir.8508.

[93] Elinor Carmi et al., "Data Citizenship: Rethinking Data Literacy in the Age of Disinformation, Misinformation, and Malinformation," *Internet Policy Review* 9, no. 2 (2020), 12, https://doi.org/10.14763/2020.2.1481.

[94] Polizzi and Taylor, "Misinformation, Digital Literacy and the School Curriculum," 4.

for individuals to enhance their digital citizenship provides insights into the government's future policy direction. The government has to coordinate and collaborate with different sectors closely to gain support or advice to improve its current education in and out of school. This helps the country overcome the challenges posed by information warfare.
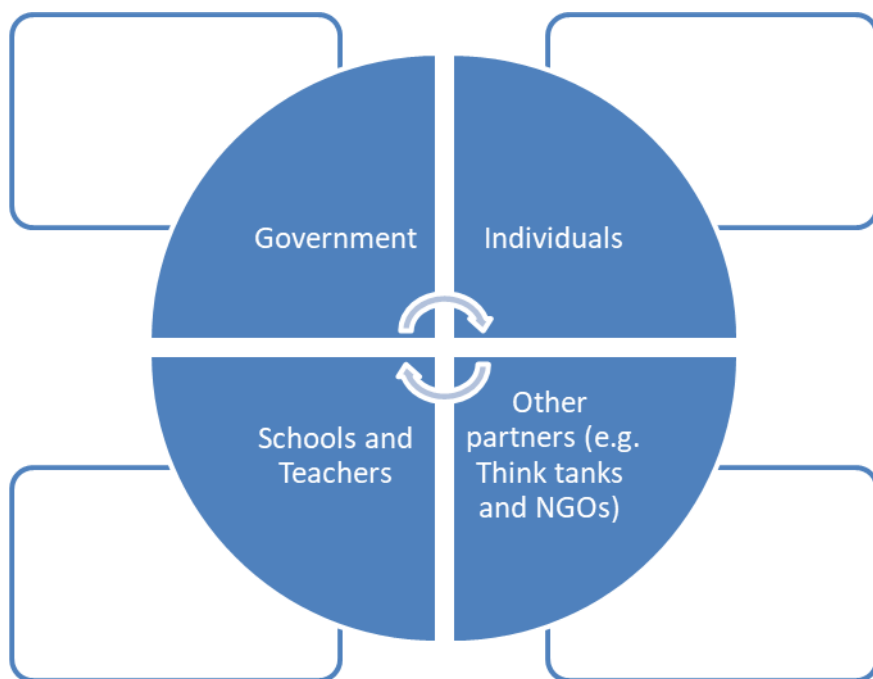
Figure 4: Summary of the Solution (by Author).

Conclusion

The Russia-Ukraine war has demonstrated that the extensive use of information warfare can profoundly impact people's attitudes to the war and its development. By providing a systematic categorization and analysis of the use of information warfare during the war, this article contributes to future security studies investigating old and new tactics while focusing on a theoretical perspective. More empirical research is needed to comprehensively evaluate the impact of such tactics, thus assessing the threat posed by information warfare.

It should, however, be noted that this article is not entirely attributing some people's support towards Russia in the war to information warfare. Other factors, such as Russia's well-established positions in developing countries and the backlash of the West's harsh sanctions, could also cause individuals to be more pro-

Russian in this crisis. These factors, including information warfare, could complement each other to reinforce people's pro-Russian attitudes further. This article, therefore, aimed to highlight, but not over-emphasize, the role of information warfare in the war.

Meanwhile, this article has shed light on the multi-faceted use of Information warfare in the Russia-Ukraine war. Information warfare is rapidly evolving, but unfortunately, the democratic community is not yet well-prepared for the increasing coverage of manipulated information. There is much for us to do to develop an effective response to the challenge posed by manipulated content. Therefore, such dynamics of international security are serving as an alarm that the democratic community and security discipline must keep an eye on the development of such creative forms of warfare so that we can respond appropriately to future information warfare.

The future of democracy could remain hopeful if individuals and the government recognize their important stakes in shaping a community that is resilient against information warfare. Individuals have to step up to be critical and responsible citizens. Comprehensive education developed and promoted by the concerted efforts of multiple parties is also necessary to make citizens capable of combating manipulated information. Therefore, close collaboration between the government and relevant parties is strongly encouraged.

Disclaimer

About the Author

Ho Ting (Bosco) Hung is a BSc in Politics and International Relations student at the London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE). He is a member of the International Team for the Study of Security Verona. Recently, he presented at the Oxford Hong Kong Forum 2022 and was interviewed by Asharq News and Al Jazeera to provide a geopolitical analysis of world politics. He has written for The Webster Review of International History, Oxford Political Review, International Policy Digest, Modern Diplomacy, The Geopolitics, and International Affairs Forum. He is mainly interested in Sino-US relations, Chinese politics, foreign policy analysis, gender, political economy, and human rights.
E-mail: h.t.hung@lse.ac.uk

Research Article

Lessons for NATO to Be Learned from Putin's War in Ukraine: Global Health Engagement, Interoperability, and Lethality

John M. Quinn

Migrant Offshore Aid Station, https://www.moas.eu/

Abstract: The Russian invasion of Ukraine exacts a heavy death toll of preventable morbidity and mortality of warfighters and vulnerable civilian communities. Global Health Engagement (GHE) with partner forces across the entire continuum of care, from the point of injury/wounding to rehabilitation, promote interoperability, medical readiness, and lethality. Owing to Russia's recent tactical and combat movements in Georgia, Ukraine, Belarus, and elsewhere in Europe, GHE activities offered by NATO and unilaterally by member states must increase. Multi-domain attacks by Russia, China, and other malicious actors exacerbate global health security risks and war-related injuries and illnesses. NATO-led GHE activities for warfighting in Ukraine can support foreign policy interests with targeted application and, in return, yield maximum benefits to NATO and member states. Medical readiness, interoperability, and lethality can be achieved through a coordinated effort across all medical actors to standardize the medical evacuation chain, conduct transparent deployment of mobile medical units, and increase access to damage control resuscitation and surgery through echelons of care. Sharing lessons learned helps Ukraine, as well as NATO and its member states. These main themes of effort will reduce preventable morbidity and mortality in support of warfighting and state sovereignty.

Keywords: defense cooperation, Global Health Engagement, GHE, military medicine, medical readiness, Lethality, Ukraine, NATO, health security.

Introduction

Security threats throughout NATO's Eastern flank are significant and disruptive and may require new approaches to maximize outcomes that benefit NATO's strategic objectives and collective defense. Russia poses a major threat to regional security throughout Europe. Deterrence, collective defense, crisis management, and disaster prevention and response are key operations of the NATO alliance.

NATO must support and lead the coordination of Global Health Engagement (GHE) efforts in Ukraine to reduce morbidity and mortality from warfighting and to sharpen both Ukraine and NATO forces' medical readiness. GHE builds a more lethal force by modernizing key capabilities, evolving innovative operational concepts, promoting sustainability, and cultivating workforce talent. Building partnerships and implementing reform directly supports enhanced lethality of the warfighting function.[1] Global Health Engagement activities across NATO and partners offer an opportunity for security cooperation and engagement with second and third-order effects of stability and deterrence and increase medical readiness, interoperability, and lethality against new health threats from infectious disease to peer-on-peer conflict.

For the purposes of this article, standardized NATO terminology has been deployed to consider advancements and describe all echelons of care throughout the evacuation chain.[2] Role 1 basics of medical care include continued tactical field care and initiation of Damage Control Resuscitation (DCR) based on capabilities. Role 2 provides damage control resuscitation and damage control surgery (DCS) with limited intensive care unit capabilities. Role 3 offers comprehensive surgical and advanced levels of care in a theater. Finally, Role 4 provides comprehensive medical care, rehabilitation, and follow-on surgical capabilities as needed for all diagnostics and all patients. Within the first five months of fighting in Ukraine, the most significant gaps remain in the Point of Injury (PoI) / Point of Wounding (PoW) care and tactical evaluation to that of Role 3, including evacuation and critical care transport.

Prior to the Russian hostilities initiated in 2014, Ukraine's emergency services dealt with civilian-focused trauma and emergency medical services with disaster response focused on natural disasters. With the large-scale Russian invasion in February 2022, Ukraine introduced Martial Law, which significantly impacts clinical governance across all defense and healthcare sectors and institutions. The prehospital medical challenges in Ukraine are significant, although very specific.

---

[1] Derek Licina and Jackson Taylor, "International Trauma Capacity Building Programs: Modernizing Capabilities, Enhancing Lethality, Supporting Alliances, Building Partnerships, and Implementing Reform," *Military Medicine* 187, no. 7-8 (July-August 2022): 172-174, https://doi.org/10.1093/milmed/usab539.

[2] For a comprehensive and detailed definition description of the echelons of care, see: Miguel A. Cubano, *Emergency War Surgery*, 5th US Revision (Government Printing Office, 2018).

Ukraine is an emerging lower-middle-income European Nation with an integrated healthcare system prior to the Russian invasion. Before this iteration of Russian violence and invasion in February 2022, Ukraine boasted access to NATO equivalent civilian Role 1, Role 2, and Role 3 levels of care. Ukraine's approach has fostered interoperability across the Armed Forces of Ukraine (AFU) and with multiple civilian disaster and medical institutions. Additionally, Ukraine was well-integrated with road, bridge, rail, and other transportation means for a country that, if you placed it over the eastern United States, would stretch from Missouri to the Atlantic Ocean and from Ohio to Georgia. Ukraine's spanning geography is challenging for medical evacuation when air evacuation is not viable. Air superiority is contested throughout areas of fighting in Ukraine. Multiple medical and hygiene aircraft have been shut down. Despite the Geneva conventions, Russia specifically targets medical evacuation vehicles, personnel, and medical support assets.

Despite the excellent levels of care received in the civilian healthcare sector throughout Ukraine, military medicine and DCR/DCS, including the provision of blood transfusion in the prehospital space, were completely lacking and inadequate for the Russian threat and the impact of the February 2022 invasion. Massive advances have been made with many success stories, but more is required in order to mitigate injuries and ensure the lethality of the Armed Forces of Ukraine (AFU). The clinical learning curve in Ukraine has been extremely steep, and more needs to be done in order to reduce preventable morbidity and mortality.

Basic Definitions

Medical readiness is both individual and institutional. An individual is ready when medically fit to deploy and be in contact with fighting activities. Institutional medical readiness is the ability to deploy and conduct expeditionary medical activities, establish a medical evacuation chain, and provide medical support for deployed personnel. Interoperability within military medicine is very complex. It is not only the ability of recipient and partner nations to work together but, more importantly, for patients to be treated within two distinct and separate systems and receive 100 % the same level of care in both medical forces interchangeably.

The U.S. Department of Defense Instruction (DODI), tacitly accepted across several NATO member states, uses the definition of Global Health Engagement (GHE) as the interaction between the DoD and Partner Nations' armed forces or civilian authorities.[3] The 2017 landmark DODI 2000.30 puts GHE into focus: "...in coordination with the U.S. interagency, to build trust and confidence, share information, coordinate mutual activities, maintain influence, and achieve interoperability in support of U.S. national security policy and military strategy." This DODI goes on to define GHE activities that establish, reconstitute, maintain, or

---

[3] Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy, "DoD Instruction 2000.30 Global Health Engagement (GHE) activities" (2017).

improve the capabilities or capacities of the partner nation's military or civilian health sector or those of the DoD. Clearly, GHE across not only DoD and NATO member states but, most importantly, NATO partner states such as Ukraine, Moldova, and Georgia are at the forefront of a two-way street of GHE that enables recipient states and provides the U.S. and NATO members with key insight and up to date battlefield data to enhance and focus medical readiness and lethality. Lethality is the ability to influence and neutralize targets kinetically and across the multi-domain battlefield of land, sea, air, space, and cyber.

Historical Background: Past as Prologue

After Russia's 2014 invasion and occupation of Ukrainian territory, Ukraine has been a leading recipient of U.S. military aid in Europe and Eurasia, most notably in humanitarian, medical, and non-lethal security cooperation. The Ukrainian Security Assistance Initiative (USAI) offers a broad menu of security cooperation, and GHE activities are prevalent throughout multiple streams of security cooperation funding. U.S. foreign policy interests and recent legislation from Congress focus on support for the sovereignty, integrity, democracy, and economic stability of Ukraine. This has included countering Russian influence in Europe and Eurasia and countering America's adversaries through sanctions. Upon Russia's recent iteration of war from February 2022, the U.S. and other NATO partner forces have offered tens of billions of dollars worth of additional military and humanitarian aid. However, money and material support will not alone increase Ukraine's sovereignty or improve its interoperability with NATO and lethality of forces – specific collaboration and coordination are required across all force modalities with monitoring and evaluation activities.

State Sovereignty

Relations between NATO and Ukraine began in the early 1990s and have developed into one of the most substantial NATO partnerships marking Ukraine as a "Special Partner." With the onset of the Russia-Ukraine war, cooperation has intensified in critical areas, with GHE a major focus. From NATO's stance, a sovereign, independent, and stable Ukraine, firmly committed to democracy and the rule of law, is key to Euro-Atlantic security. The focus on sovereignty and independence of action is most clearly evidenced regionally with Sweden and Finland's Membership Action Plan (MAP) for NATO membership, historically neutral and non-aligned countries shifting in light of Putin's further advances against the sovereign borders of Ukraine.

Additionally, other NATO partners such as Georgia and, more recently, North Macedonia, until its membership acceptance, also received significant security cooperation in the form of global health engagement activities. Montenegro became a full NATO member in 2017, and Bosnia-Herzegovina received its membership action plan (MAP) in 2010. Both Ukraine and Georgia were issued a verbal promise of a MAP in 2008 at the Bucharest summit. In the past two decades, the NATO enlargement timeline has seen significant growth, strengthening the

alliance, encouraging deterrence of potential adversaries, and providing collective defense against emerging health security threats and diseases, disasters, and a potential Article 5 security event. Global Health Engagement activities can encourage these themes that support strengthening the alliance, encouraging deterrence, and better supporting collective defense through medical readiness and increased lethality. The two leading security partner aspirant nations of Ukraine and Georgia offer case studies in interoperability of NATO military medical standards and systems and a cycle of GHE activities that increase not only the capacity and capabilities of both donor and recipient countries but also encourage information sharing and best practices to strengthen collective defense and deterrence.

Global Health Engagement and the Continuum of Care

For individual patient care in the prehospital and battlefield environment, where an injury occurs, self-aid/ buddy-aid takes place, tactical evacuation care, prolonged field care where needed, followed by resuscitative care – all defining the continuum of medical evacuation Role 1 to Role 4.[4] Any single break or weak link in this evacuation chain, whether from poor interoperability, lower medical readiness, or an overall reduction in force protection, leads to morbidity and mortality increasing precipitously. Additional systems in place to provide this cycle and continuum of care, such as education, prevention practices, rehabilitation, and multiple educational activities and evaluations, are ongoing and run parallel to patient care – even during wartime. The links throughout the disaster cycle and across the continuum of care transcend NATO member and partner state systems. Medical readiness across the alliance requires interoperability and continuous two-way engagement. It helps to reduce preventable morbidity and mortality and supports lethality and deterrence.

The Cycle of Disaster and Patient Care

For direct patient care, prehospital medical services always prepare for and treat the next patient with the true provision of best practices based on evidence and shared data. The disaster cycle is no different; however, instead of dealing with one single patient, the entire system is impacted by crisis and disaster. In the disaster cycle, disaster strikes, there is an immediate response, large-scale intervention, broad relief efforts, a rehabilitation phase restoring basic services, and a reconstruction phase leading to the full resumption of services back to baseline. The mitigation risk assessment and prevention phase, complete with hazard

---

[4] For the purposes of this article, the standardized NATO terminology and definitions of echelons of care from Point of injury with self-aid and buddy-aid, Role 1 with basic initiation of damage control resuscitation, Role 2 providing damage control resuscitation and limited damage control surgical interventions, Role 3 offering an extensive medical specialty access and continued damage control resuscitation, comprehensive damage control surgery and intensive care capabilities, and finally, Role 4, providing definitive care, rehabilitation and getting patients back to the fight.

mapping and vulnerability assessments, leads to the ongoing preparedness and contingency planning phase, preparing for the next disaster. There is no parallel system between native member states disaster preparedness and response cycles and that of local and national systems. The interoperability across contiguous and non-contiguous states of the new partnership requires persistent health engagement activities. In short, a country preparing, preventing, and responding to a disaster is no different than a prehospital healthcare system preparing, educating, and responding to emergency patients. The cycle is the same for NATO, for a national system, or for a small unit training for tactical response. Due to the unprecedented war launched by Russia, Ukraine requires specific and targeted Global Health Engagement activities to make this disaster and patient cycle more robust, transparent, and accountable and to decrease preventable morbidity and mortality.

What we propose here is that NATO and NATO partners follow the same disaster cycle for Ukraine through Global Health Engagement. These GHE activities broadly include cooperative threat reduction and health security, irregular warfare direct support, stabilization efforts focusing on building partner capacity, foreign disaster relief assistance, focusing on humanitarian aid, force health protection building partner capacity, and finally, humanitarian and civil assistance, focusing on capacity and capabilities of partner forces. The needs are manifest; however, this massive and comprehensive approach will take several years to implement fully.

This GHE guidance seeks to have military-to-military, military-to-civilian, and multi-lateral interoperability efforts, all focusing on collectively building trust and confidence, sharing information, coordinating joint activities and efforts, maintaining influence, and achieving interoperability of forces.

The clear campaign objectives of GHE activities conclude with enhancing readiness, promoting stability and security, improving confidence in partner nation governance, improving interoperability, improving medical force readiness, and strengthening partner nations not only within the military and civilian health center capacity but that of donor medical support capacity and capability. The clinical medicine components of sharing lessons learned are required to provide medical readiness in preparation for future threats. If not shared, these become lessons lost.

How Do GHE and Lessons Learned Save Lives?

With every Russian incursion and attack, preventable morbidity and mortality from battlefield-related injuries due to multi-domain battle continues to rise.

Point of injury care, medical evacuation, and access to far forward Remote Damage Control Resuscitation (RDCR/DCR [5]) and Damage Control Surgery (DCS) underwent a steep learning curve from 2014 to 2016. Tactical Combat Casualty Care (TCCC) training, Global Health Engagement (GHE) with NATO and NATO partner forces grew rapidly. Unfortunately, DCR/DCS remains a challenge for an overwhelming majority of battlefield clinicians, and rapid development and sustainable evacuation chains are inconsistent across the entire line of contact in Ukraine. Clinical stagnation and loss of clinical skills plagued medical staff in Ukraine from 2016 to 2021. Warfighting waned but persisted, while capacity and capability for prehospital medical care fell into skills fade by the reduction in practice, inadequate engagement with NATO medical structures, and poor preparation for a comprehensive Russian threat.

Lastly, the Lessons Learned (LL) from Iraq and Afghanistan have promoted the clinical practice guidelines (CPGs) across NATO from the point of injury care and DCR/DCS right through to Role 4 and prolonged rehabilitation for both physical and behavioral outcomes. However, whether these clinical paradigms need to be adjusted against new hybrid tactical threats from Russia and weapon systems from China remains to be seen. The lessons learned from Iraq and Afghanistan stem from a different adversary, firing weapons not by design, using improvised weapon systems and insurgency tactics, while Russia deploys a conventional top-tier military with advanced weapons systems. With deadly fires by design, it has killed tens of thousands of people throughout Ukraine in the short period from February 2022 to January 2023.

The required Lessons Shared (LS) from Ukraine may impact these CPGs to better account for the new and modern weapon systems and hybrid tactics deployed by Russia and other bad actors to maximize the best medical outcomes. I hope these adjustments and clinical practice guideline changes reduce preventable morbidity and mortality across the entire NATO alliance and partner forces. The maximum benefit and extraction of these lessons learned/ lessons shared through partner forces via Global Health Engagement activities can be optimized to promote NATO strategic interests, as well as deterrence and collective defense across the NATO alliance.

Despite many advancements and lessons learned (and some lessons lost), the 2022 Russian invasion has highlighted growing gaps in point of injury and prehospital medicine for Ukraine's military and at the military-civilian interface, especially for the evacuation chain. Interoperability is challenged and requires both clinical and operational focus, and when performed well in concert on the battlefield can also increase lethality. In an effort to mitigate these lessons lost, AFU must increase its collaboration, coordination, and direct information flow to the NATO Center of Excellence for Military Medicine ("MILMED CoE"), also with that of NATO and NATO partner forces such as country-specific centers of excellence

---

[5] For the purposes of this article, remote damage control resuscitation and damage control resuscitation are used interchangeably for the prehospital environment, i.e., RDCR = DCR.

for trauma standardization (i.e., Joint Trauma System (JTS) in the U.S. Department of Defense), and patient care in the prehospital space.

Ukrainian Solutions, NATO Standards

The core nucleus of point of injury / point of wounding care revolves around the methodology and clinical approaches of Tactical Combat Casualty Care (TCCC). Effective DCR/DCS cannot occur or be successful without solid TCCC approaches at PoI/PoW. At the point of injury, self-aid and buddy aid are required with the use of an improvised or individual first aid kit (IFAK). The next phase is tactical field and evacuation care, leading to casualty evacuation to a Role 1 medical facility and access and/or *en route care* to a Role 2 medical facility. The medical journey does not end at Role 2 and continues via critical care and en route care and transport from a Role 2 to a Role 3 facility. Without the ability to facilitate rotary and fixed-wing aircraft for the purposes of evacuation, all of the steps can be delayed, and these delays can lead to death. The patients' journey through these echelons of care must always provide additional expanded services at each waypoint. This standardized process not only saves life and limb but also gets warfighters back to the fight and supports lethality. All these steps are required to reduce morbidity and mortality, support returning warfighters to action, and maximize medical outcomes and quality of life.

NATO Standardization

These overriding clinical principles are discussed and described in a 2018 NATO Standard Agreement (STANAG) relating to medical care across the defense alliance. This STANAG references military medicine, echelons of care, needs for an evacuation chain, and basic metrics therein.[6] These military medical standard agreements provide a venue that serves military medical interoperability in times of crisis and disaster. Ukraine is a partner nation of NATO and a potential aspirant nation that ascribes to these standards and is at war with a superior adversary found in the Russian state. Aligning these NATO military medical standards and sharing lessons with NATO will not only support in reducing preventable morbidity and mortality but also enrich and strengthen the NATO defense alliance and its military medical structures, systems, and institutions.

The medical lessons learned to date through Ukrainian loss of life must not be overlooked. It is vital to capture these critical medical data points to streamline NATO medical systems. One highlighted Ukraine's solution to standards adherence with success is that of the Ukrainian Center for Transplant Coordination (UTCC), providing blood for far-forward and prehospital use. UTCC coordinates universal donor O-Negative blood from Western Ukraine to Eastern regions. Can

---

[6]   NATO, "Allied Joint Medical Doctrine for Military Health Care (MHC)," NATO Standard AJMedP-8, Edition A, Version 1 (NATO: NATO Standardization Office (NSO), February 2018), https://www.coemed.org/files/stanags/02_AJMEDP/AJMedP-8_EDA_V1_E_2598.pdf.

NATO be as agile in the event of an Article 5 scenario? Sharing these lessons of far-forward blood transfer in the prehospital space through GHE activities may help to answer this better and many other pressing operational medical questions. An additional lesson learned from the Ukraine war fighting experience occurred in 2014 and 2015 with the first field use of tranexamic acid in the intramuscular (I.M.) route; and advanced and unconventional vascular surgical interventions to save lives, among many others. There are likely several hundred, if not thousands, of anecdotal clinical lessons learned from Ukraine that, if not shared, will be lost.

GHE and Ukraine to Date

2013-2014 political and social unrest lead to mass demonstrations by Ukrainians in the streets and the Russian annexation of Crimea with an invasion and occupation of South-Eastern Ukraine. Under political pressure to deconflict with Russia, non-lethal security/military support in the health/medical domain increased. Through multiple programs offered by European Command (EUCOM), such as Humvee ambulances, the basic point of injury care/TCCC training, and Expeditionary Medical Support (EMEDS) Role 2, the portfolio grew and expanded rapidly over 2014-2016. Additionally, the NATO Partnership for Peace (PfP) academic events relating to medical and health expanded, drawing many health security partners and promoting GHE activities and connections.

In order to meet the increased Russian violence, Role 1 / Role 2 operational activity and capacity increased rapidly as well, with the point of injury care capability increasing with an anecdotal reduction in mortality. The evolution of warfare with Russia and proxy forces continued with an escalation of the types of weapon systems deployed and targets acquired by Russian forces. Within the DoD and Department of State, through the Office of Defense Cooperation (ODC), portfolio management and program sustainability became challenging. A newer and ongoing rehabilitation GHE program brought positive results. However, examples of learning and sharing lessons by NATO and partners are infrequent and limited, and, in some instances, lessons are lost.

Although there are multiple iterations of this GHE cycle in Ukraine, owing to the significant kinetic activity from 2014 onwards, the GHE portfolio assessment is expanding. Ukraine AFU providing a single voice through its military medical institutions will help reduce duplication of requests and efforts and maximize resource allocation through GHE. The expansive 2021 Ukraine Security Assistance Initiative (USAI) provides significant defensive support, with a large element on emergency medical care and medical services serving the continuum of care. With the start of the fiscal year 2022, additional emergency measures support the provision of immediate aid to Ukraine to continue the fight against Russian hybrid and conventional warfare within its own territory, with just under $8 billion devoted towards military aid and assistance. This number has increased sevenfold as the fighting continues.

As these iterations of the GHE cycle revolve, some highlighted challenges become very clear. The Armed Forces of Ukraine (AFU) still struggle with lateralized decision-making, leaving many basic decisions about patient care, patient movement, and overall coordination of the medical evacuation continuum centralized or otherwise hierarchical. Additionally, as mentioned previously, the lessons learned/lessons shared (LL/LS) have slowly expanded since 2014. Yet, many clinical, logistical, and operational activities relating to the point of injury care in the medical experience of Ukraine while fighting Russian forces were not recorded, remained unknown, and in some instances, were lost. Weapons systems evolution, trauma registry and information exchange, DCS/ DCR exchange, and interoperability still remain a challenge.

Having said that, currently highlighted positive outcomes must be described: POI survivability increased to 95 % in 2018-2019 through TCCC training and competency for warfighters, the National Association for Emergency Medical Technicians (NAEMT) trainers, and a military-led Emergency Medical Technician (EMT) Basic course continues to train in prehospital medicine; there is a described 20 % of amputee patients returning to active duty compared to 0 % prior to 2014; a reviewed Role 1 was evaluated by the NATO Military Medical Center of Excellence in Budapest. These highlights are significant and likely exist due to GHE activities by NATO and member states. Additional gains must be promoted.

Outcomes and Opportunities

More recently, in addition to the historical GHE results described above, there are gaps but also multiple opportunities. The outpouring of medical and clinical support by foreign volunteers entering Ukraine is significant. The Ministry of Health of Ukraine developed a process in order to obtain clinical governance and temporary certification/licensure for foreign volunteers, although language can be a significant barrier to patient care. Additionally, Ukraine expanded its foreign fighters' group or Foreign Legion with medical support elements. Multiple medical resources and support for vulnerable communities are found within the World Health Organization (WHO), most notably its health cluster methodology. Access to the health cluster will increase interoperability and provide a conduit for medical services across all communities under Martial Law.

Additionally, there are multiple prehospital volunteer medical groups, some that were around before the 2014 fighting and others that expanded later and provided varying levels of clinical service. These volunteer groups provide a greatly needed service by EMTs, nurses, paramedics, physicians' assistants, technician-level personnel, and doctors. In order to continue the provision of clinical care under Martial Law, these medical volunteers must provide in date certification and licensure, obtain their clinical governance from the Ministry of Health (MoH) to practice in their respective scope, and either report directly to MoH or AFU as a unified command. GHE activities related to clinical governance must be expanded and shared.

Tactical Evacuation Care

The Tactical Evacuation phase of care is where casualties are moved from the hostile and austere tactical environment or zero line where they were injured to a more secure location capable of providing advanced medical care. This is extremely challenging in Ukraine as Russia targets specific medical vehicles for annihilation. Coordination of efforts is needed to retrieve patients from the zero line with purpose-built vehicles, coordinate and communicate across volunteer and official groups, thus maximizing medical personnel with support and mitigating the risks to rescuers and patients alike.

The term "Tactical Evacuation" includes both CASEVAC and MEDEVAC; the term tactical evacuation care is the PoI/PoW to Role 1 and includes both MEDEVAC and CASEVAC. Warfighters in Ukraine perish because of planning errors, inadequate evacuation chains, and no access to both CASEVAC and MEDEVAC. In addition, in order to access from the zero line to initiate an evacuation, self-feeding buddy aid at the point of injury must be expanded with additional access to more IFAKs and TCCC standardized training.

En Route Care (Role 1 to Role 2)

Due to the Russian attack and weapons systems deployed, using rotary and fixed-wing aircraft for evacuation is unsafe as the sky is contested. En route care takes place across all platforms of rendering care while transporting a patient to a higher echelon of care and requires specialized training, highly skilled medical personnel, and special equipment. Failure to provide best practices can lead to preventable morbidity and mortality at this critical Role 1 to Role 2 phase.

A critical gap identified for those trauma patients receiving some level of DCR at a Role 1 and requiring complex MEDEVAC to a Role 2 persists. The clinical complexity of this may require a reassessment of tourniquets and peripheral wounds, advanced pharmacotherapy such as sedation, advanced pain management, paralytics, and blood transfusion, management of a chest tube or a central venous line, or management of an intubated and ventilated patient.

Critical Care (Role 2 to Role 3 / Role 4)

Ukraine has a robust civilian critical care prehospital and interfacility transport infrastructure. With so many civilian equivalent Role 2 to Role 4 facilities destroyed, the healthcare system is under extreme stress. Unfortunately, Ukraine lacks the ability to provide critical care transport across the geography of the peri-battlefield environment and throughout the military and civilian evacuation chains at the required volume. Critical care support can be initiated at the entry into the evacuation chain requiring capability and continues through increased levels of care to definitive care en route to a higher echelon of care. The provision of critical care transport across echelons of care for the vulnerable pediatric, adult, and geriatric populations reduces preventable morbidity and mortality.

Mobile Medical Units in Ukraine (MMU)

The acute loss of over 400 healthcare facilities and potentially several thousand medical staff from death and displacement has put an unsurmountable strain on the healthcare system throughout Ukraine. Deploying fit-for-purpose military-grade mobile Role 1 and Role 2 hospitals, providing initial DCR, and more sophisticated DCS and intensive care capabilities are expensive, difficult, and require a lot of training and preparation. However, with appropriate preparation, planning, staffing, and budget, the mobility these MMUs offer, the sheer proximity to the battlefield, and the deployment flexibility can greatly reduce morbidity and mortality.

Since 2014 and more recently, multiple NATO and member states have provided and offered a myriad of MMUs to AFU with varying success. Since February 2022, there have been over five highly advanced Mission ready Role 2 hospitals donated to provide direct support to warfighting. It is unclear where these are deployed, how they plug into the evacuation chain throughout the regions, and whether partner forces can engage and support the daily clinical and operational activities. Through basic operational security, transparently mapping the whereabouts of these MMUs, clearly listing their capabilities and capacity, and providing detailed staffing through echelons of care will enhance emergency medical support and care and help with command and control throughout the evacuation chain.

Chemical, Biological, Radiological, Nuclear, and Ecological (CBRNE) Threats and GHE

The threat of a subthreshold Article 5 event in a NATO or a partner state leading to loss of additional territory and battle initiative remains moderate to high, while the threat of a CBRNE event remains extreme throughout Ukraine and bordering countries. This reality may threaten the legitimacy of the alliance. On an operational and tactical level, sharing medical technology, best practices, and other GHE activities may lead to loss of medical innovation and emerging technology or medical intelligence losses during a health security event such as a new pandemic, emerging infectious disease, or a CBRNE event. Simply stated, sharing medical intelligence with partner states, not yet full members, involves risks. Attribution helps dictate a response to include Article 5 events. Early warning systems, early detection, and clear attribution of any potential CBRNE threat require open and broad GHE communication, access to Partner forces laboratories and diagnostic equipment, and will require a response on a regional and potentially global scale. NATO and the DoD Defense Threat Reduction Agency (DTRA) need access to Ukraine and flows of data and information to best respond and assign attribution in a CBRNE event.

Discussion

Ukraine and Partner nations receive great quantitative and qualitative value in capability, access to partner forces, enhanced deterrence, lethality, and medical readiness by investing in GHE activities. GHE and NATO interoperability are correlated, judging by the current evidence. NATO partner nations participate in GHE activities and offer anecdotes of NATO standards and many other medical and health security-related alternatives to current practice.

The medical evacuation chain for this current iteration of Russian violence is still inadequate, not standardized, nor well integrated at the military-civilian interface, and lacks interoperability where partner forces can plug in, provide in-person support, and augment medical personnel. The evacuation chain will benefit from increasing military medical command and control and integration of these civilian prehospital providers under one command, requiring accountability and transparency in their practice and allowing for clinical data exchange with partner forces. Consolidating military medical command and control (C2) across all defense services, based on evidence and comprehensive geographical assessment of the location of assets, such as recently donated MMUs, Mobile Role 2s, armored ambulances, and a small army of military medical and civilian medical volunteers is required. This will include a list of all areas of operations/ responsibility (AORs), mapping Role 1s and Role 2s, and identifying receiving Role 3s (to include the newly added MMUs and locating the deployed mobile Role 2s from foreign partners). This must also include needs assessment and review of MMUs and forward surgical teams (FST) for the current situation and in planning for future needs in February-September 2023 battle and potential offensive operations. The need for frameshift changes in the quality, quantity, and accessibility of AFU medical teams is manifest.

Additionally, the implementation of medical standards and standardization alignments is extremely challenging for any military medical service. Attempting to provide evidence-based medicine, clinical practice guidelines, and other clinical details while fighting and being actively engaged in war is impossible, even given the hard work already completed. Ukraine urgently needs:

- a complete Ukrainian language translation for the comprehensive DoD Clinical Practice Guidelines (CPGs) for prehospital medicine
- an AFU point of contact for all volunteer medical groups (both national and international)
- a working group for all volunteer medical groups in Ukraine to link and coordinate efforts, provide information sharing and training, and comprise a viable and accountable medical evacuation chain.

Ukraine will likely continue aligning its military medical standards with those of NATO and partner forces. In addition to providing lessons learned and sharing clinical evidence with NATO military medical centers of excellence, it will engage with NATO and NATO nations for direct patient care. The process of receiving

115

Ukrainian warfighters as patients abroad must be expanded and made sustainable. With support from partner forces, Ukraine's military medical services can conduct a needs assessment for medical evacuation to higher echelons of care—for both warfighters and civilian communities—within Ukraine, to the European Union, and further afield. This will require ground and air evacuation services to neighboring countries such as Romania, Slovakia, Hungary, Poland, and beyond.

Summary and Key Recommendations

The nexus of Global Health Engagement supporting readiness, interoperability, and lethality for NATO and Ukraine is manifest. Support from NATO and partners is required to achieve GHE results better, consolidating military C2 across AFU and other defense services. Through GHE activities, the AFU can also map all areas of operations/ responsibility (AORs), list Role 1s and Role 2s, and identify receiving Role 3s (including MMUs from foreign partners), mobile assets, and hard medical locations. This will enable NATO partners to identify gaps, support pre-existing infrastructure and potentially deploy subject matter experts not only to provide support services but also through direct operational learning.

At a very practical level, the AFU can assign a Point of Contact (PoC) for liaison with the World Health Organization Health Cluster, NATO liaison for medical evacuation of patients out of Ukraine to higher echelons of care to allow for surge capacity for local facilities. It can establish a standard operating procedure (SOP) with all stakeholders and an accountable and transparent medical referral system out of Ukraine into NATO states for patients requiring advanced surgical interventions and rehabilitation to support with surge capacity. Elements of this process started in mid-2022, although no single unified methodology has been applied. Additionally, Ukraine can assign a liaison direct to MILMED CoE and the Joint Trauma System (JTS) for information and lessons learned sharing and battlefield data compilation. Finally, the AFU can assign a point of contact for all volunteer medical groups (both national and international) to reduce duplication of effort and establish a working group for all volunteer medical groups. This will help link and coordinate efforts, provide information sharing and training, and attain a viable, transparent, and accountable medical evacuation chain. This will include all regions and liaisons with the WHO health cluster.

In order to expand early warning and detection systems with more data input and collaboration, medical intelligence and live potential Sentinel events must be shared across AFU, NATO, and DTRA/CDC systems to maximize communication and levels of detection of any CBRNE event.

For clinical collaboration purposes, the AFU can request a complete Ukrainian translation for the comprehensive Department of Defense clinical practice guidelines for prehospital medicine. This translation can be updated annually with two-way communication and lessons learned, adding to CPGs across all uniformed forces.

The AFU should request support from partners to conduct monitoring and evaluation activities with all GHE activities internally and share with partner

forces what works and what is needed based on evidence to maximize support and be accountable to donor nations.

Ukraine may seek the provision of military-civilian medical evacuation platforms, e.g., for expanding rotary and fixed wing, maritime, and advanced far-forward armored evacuation. The AFU can request medical deployments for NATO and partner forces to Role 2s/Role 3s. NATO may expand its warehousing of CBRNE prevention, response, and training in areas bordering Ukraine, i.e., in Poland, Romania, Slovakia, or Hungary, in order to amass and prepare for potential CBRNE attacks.

Conclusion

Morbidity and mortality among Ukrainian warfighters and vulnerable civilian communities are inversely proportional to quality access to a viable evacuation chain. Global Health Engagement activities have myriad qualitative and quantitative effects. GHE activities align with NATO medical standards and support NATO and partner states. When used and executed efficiently and effectively, GHE can be used as a tool and modality to promote state sovereignty and help save lives in war and conflict. GHE activities provide deterrence, promote collective defense, and strengthen NATO's medical ability, capacity, and capability to respond to threats and disasters and treat patients. GHE strengthens NATO, supports medical readiness, enhances and enables interoperability, and increases the lethality of forces of both NATO and partners such as Ukraine.

More work is needed to integrate such unconventional medical elements into all phases and echelons of care to maximize medical outcomes and benefits. Interoperability is currently lacking. NATO-led GHE activities can support foreign policy interests with targeted applications and yield maximum benefit for both Ukraine and NATO member states. Medical readiness, interoperability, and lethality can be augmented through a coordinated effort across all medical actors to standardize the medical evacuation chain, conduct transparent deployment of mobile medical units, increase access to DCR/DCS through echelons of care, and share lessons learned. These main themes of effort will reduce preventable morbidity and mortality in support of warfighting and state sovereignty.

List of Abbreviations

AOR	Area of Operations / Responsibility
AFU	Armed Forces of Ukraine
CAPES	Capability and Evaluation Assessment
C2	Command and Control
CPG	Clinical Practice Guideline
DCR	Damage Control Resuscitation

DCS	Damage Control Surgery
FST	Forward Surgical Team
JTS	Joint Trauma System
MoH	Ministry of Health
MMU	Mobile Medical Unit
MILMED CoE	NATO Center of Excellence for Military Medicine
MTF	Medical Treatment Facility
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
PACE	Primary, Alternate, Contingency, and Emergency Plan
RDCR	Remote Damage Control Resuscitation
WHO	World Health Organization

Disclaimer

The views expressed are solely those of the author and do not represent official views of the PfP Consortium of Defense Academies and Security Studies Institutes, participating organizations, or the Consortium's editors.

About the Authors

John M. Quinn is Medical Director at the Humanitarian non-Governmental Organization (NGO) Migrant Offshore Aid Station (MOAS) and a recent George C. Marshal European Center for Security Studies Alumni Scholar with research emphasis on Global Health Engagement and Ukraine-NATO relations. The views expressed in this article are his own and do not reflect official policy, past, present, or future of any organization he is or has been associated with.
E-mail: john.quinn@lf1.cuni.cz

Connections: The Quarterly Journal
Submission and Style Guidelines

Connections accepts manuscripts in the range of 2,000 to 5,000 words, written in a lucid style for a target audience of informed defense and security affairs practitioners and academics. All manuscripts should be submitted to the *Connections* editorial office electronically at PfPCpublications2@marshallcenter.org or uploaded to the journal website via https://connections-qj.org. They should feature the author's name, current institutional affiliation, and a provisional title at the top of the first page, and should include footnotes where necessary. Additionally, authors should provide a manuscript abstract and keywords.

Preferred themes for future journal editions include:

> Ukraine War
> Post Conflict Management
> Countering Hybrid Warfare
> Bolstering the North Atlantic Alliance
> Competition for Resources and Its Impact on Security
> Non-State Actors in Cyber Space
> Emerging and Disruptive Technologies
> Digital Transformation and Security
> Defense Institution Building
> Reducing Corruption and Building Integrity
> Enhancing Defense Education

For questions on footnotes and references, please refer to the Chicago Manual of Style, at http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools_citationguide.html.

Unsolicited manuscripts are accepted on a rolling basis at the discretion of the PfPC Editorial Board.

In the early hours of February 24, 2022, Russian and proxy military attacked Ukraine from the north, east, and south. In parallel, Russia conducted massive cyberattacks and propaganda campaigns. To the surprise of many analysts, Ukraine demonstrated exceptional cohesion, resilience, and will to fight. The raging war is already influencing the international security environment and the thinking on societal preparedness, military capabilities and operations, and will continue to do so in the coming decades. This issue presents the early lessons learned from the war, focusing on Russia's propaganda narratives and information warfare and ways to counter them, the role of professional military education, and combat medical support.